Editor's DeskTop

As the editor of the *AURCO Journal*, I am pleased to note that Spring of 2003 and Volume 9 mark the beginning of the second decade of publication of this state–wide, refereed journal. Universities represented include Bowling Green State University, Kent State University, Miami University, Ohio State University, Ohio University, and University of Cincinnati. Regional campuses are represented by the work of 17 faculty in 14 articles: Bowling Green State University—Firelands, Kent State University—Geauga, Miami University—Middletown, Ohio State University—Marion, Ohio University—Lancaster, Ohio University—Zanesville, and University of Cincinnati—Clermont and University of Cincinnati—Raymond Walters. Kent State University and Ohio University are also represented through the plenary addresses of the 2002 Spring Conference.

Articles cover a wide range of interests and disciplines, with some authors crossing disciplines. From the concerns of the plenary addresses for the future of regional campuses and the continuing development of programs on regional campuses, articles consider the types of issues which regional campuses traditionally have been able to confront in response to the changing needs of their communities and the most recent technological developments: marketing in online communities; business technology; learning outside the classroom; team teaching and the psychology of the Internet; elementary school career education; communication in technical education; assessing online instruction; a cross-disciplinary approach to cultural anthropology and English composition; portfolio assessment; writing for children; critical thinking in assessing moral dimensions of literature; intercultural service learning; a contractual approach for classroom expectations; and learning through questioning.

Regional campus faculty from across the state have served as reviewers and represent the following universities: Bowling Green State University—Firelands, Kent State University—Stark, Kent State University—Trumbull, Miami University—Middletown, Ohio State University—Marion, Ohio University—Chillicothe, Ohio University—Southern, Ohio University—Zanesville, University of Akron—Wayne, and Wright State University—Lake.

Mere citations of numbers and names, however, do not indicate the amount and significance of labor and concern that regional faculty have expressed in these pages. As one notes through reading the articles, regional faculty are attuned to the needs of their students and communities. Moreover, they are fully cognizant of the necessity for continually devising and re-devising the means to educate and prepare their communities for the challenges of the workplace, the academy, and indeed the world. Although their concerns and expertise are voiced through a variety of means and disciplines, throughout one may note the similarity of their sincerity of voice, breadth of learning, and willingness to incorporate new technology in the most positive manner to benefit their students. Throughout these pages one may get a sense that throughout Ohio regional campus faculty are meeting the challenges of the twenty–first century.

No publication is possible without the combined efforts of a number of individuals. I want to here thank Lee Fox–Cardamone, Associate Editor, for her work in maintaining contact with our editorial board and making the work of the editor less difficult by keeping the flow of papers and reviews on time. I want to welcome Robert Sturr as the journal's new Managing Editor and thank him for his efforts to maintain communications with the universities and the regional campuses and secure a sound basis for the journal's continued financial health. Also deserving of my thanks are those who have proofed the journal and have also been responsible for its mailing: Gretchen Bollenbacher, Public Relations Assistant, and Carol Jones, Faculty Secretary.

AURCO Journal Online

AURCO Journal is now available online at Ohio University—Southern at the following location: www.southern.ohiou.edu/aurco. My thanks go to: Terry Quinn, associate editor of *Etude & Techne* and mathematics professor at Ohio University—Southern for arranging for the online version; to Dean Dan Evans for allowing AURCO to use the technical resources of Ohio University—Southern; and to Jed Utsinger and his assistant Porsche Dillon for taking care of the technical matters in maintaining the site.

Arthur A. Molitierno
AURCO Journal Editor
Wright State University—Lake

Plenary Addresses

Academic Program Development at Ohio University's Regional Campuses

Charles P. Bird
Vice President for Regional Higher Education
Ohio University

In my remarks today, I would like to concentrate on some issues related to the development of academic programs on our regional campuses. To that end, I will describe some key characteristics of Regional Higher Education (RHE) at Ohio University, discuss briefly some important trends that we see, and outline four areas of focus that we believe are critical to our success.

There are five regional campuses at Ohio University, enrolling approximately 8,000 students per quarter, with an unduplicated annual headcount of nearly 12,000. Collectively, we have approximately 120 tenure track faculty members, as well as several dozen nontenure track, but nearly full time faculty members. Two of our campuses, Eastern and Zanesville, are considered to be co–located with technical colleges, whereas the Chillicothe, Lancaster, and Southern Campuses have a comprehensive mission that includes technical associate degree programs. Two years ago, we became the degree–granting unit for the technical associate degree programs, giving us direct responsibility for the curriculum in those areas.

Currently, we offer 22 associate degree programs. In addition, students can complete any of 10 baccalaureate programs on the regional campuses, and we offer some master's degree programs that rotate irregularly among the campuses in a cohort–based format.

It is important to know that RHE includes the Athens–based Division of Lifelong Learning, which is responsible for credit and noncredit continuing education on the Athens campus and in locations other than the regional campuses. This responsibility includes coordination of the delivery of the University's distance programs, as well as some international programs, including several in Hong Kong. We also have been responsible for independent study through correspondence for nearly 80 years, and we administer conferences and workshops on behalf of the University.

Lifelong Learning and the five regional campuses are linked by a common mission of outreach and access. It is our role to create educational opportunities in a wide variety of locations, using whatever delivery methods may be available to us that are consistent with our expectations for quality. We operate as a somewhat decentralized system, with a very small staff in our central office, but with a goal of maximizing all of the human and financial resources available to us. I believe that the opportunities created by having five regional campuses, with a relatively large number of faculty, and the Division of Lifelong Learning, with access to student populations beyond those campuses, are important to our approach to program development.

National Trends

As I think about the future of our regional campuses, there are several national trends that push us toward emphasizing closer relationships among the various units in RHE and toward expansion of the academic programs available on regional campuses. For example, higher education seems to have become increasingly competitive, forcing institutions to consider carefully where they fit in relation to other institutions, how they price their programs, and how they control the costs of developing and delivering those programs. Institutions such as ours need to be clear about their commitment to quality and high standards for students, while being extremely student–centered in providing services, flexible in their use of locations and formats, thoughtful about their marketing strategies, and much more sophisticated in their management of budgets.

Beyond competition, but clearly related to it, is the issue of employing new technologies to deliver programs. At Ohio University, we believe that blended programs represent an appropriate niche for us that is consistent with providing flexibility to students, allowing for the delivery of programs nearly anywhere in the world, but maintaining the direct, face–to–face contact that we believe is necessary for the quality we seek and the structure that assures student persistence and success. Thus, although we make heavy use of the Internet, interactive video, and other technologies, we also bring students together for intensive residencies or for other meetings, and we relatively rarely use an online format for entire courses and programs. Not only do we gain flexibility through this type of approach, but we are obtaining a very high level of student satisfaction, a certain amount of state and national recognition that helps with our competitiveness, at least at the graduate level, and a cost effective method for course and program development.

A third important trend is the increasing emphasis on the importance of higher education for economic development. It is clear that funding agencies and employers, not to mention students, are looking to us to provide the education and training necessary for the modern work force. As a result, people really are returning to college and looking for credit and noncredit programs that will prepare them for new careers or for advancement in their current careers.

This trend is important because regional campuses are well–positioned to respond to this demand. The type of lifelong education that is required needs to be available at convenient locations, scheduled at times to meet the needs of students, and supported by responsive student services. The relative convenience of our locations for many individuals, as well as our affordable tuition and commitment to student support, should allow regional campuses to do very well in this environment.

These observations lead directly to the fourth trend, which is something we call “extended access.” By extended access we mean that students today need access to much more than the types of feeder programs or terminal associate degrees that we offered in the past. The demand for baccalaureate completion programs, credit and noncredit certificate programs, master’s degree programs that are oriented toward careers and contract training will only increase. In many cases, universities will find that regional campuses are in a better position to respond to certain of these needs than are larger, more traditional campuses. Yet, because of the credibility of the universities, regional campuses can become providers of choice, both in their traditional service areas and, sometimes, well beyond those areas.

I also would like to mention one additional trend that I think is underway: regional campuses are developing branches of their own. These “twigs,” as they are sometimes called, are probably better characterized as centers than as campuses. They may simply be outreach programs, offered through other institutions or in a few rooms leased in an attractive location. Or, like our centers in Pickerington and Proctorville, Ohio, they may be freestanding facilities, staffed by people who can provide critical faculty and student support but typically without resident faculty. These "branches of branches" seem to be growing all over the country. I suspect that they represent still another attempt to create flexibility in delivering educational services. In our case, we are using a variety of locations as a tool, not unlike our use of technology to create flexibility in the delivery of programs, while making sure that students have access to critical services and that faculty have appropriate facilities for live instruction.

Strategic Goals

So, given the trends we observe and the resources available to us, we have identified four areas of focus that represent broad strategic goals that can guide the priorities of our six units (five campuses and the Division of Lifelong Learning). These areas of focus are intended to concentrate attention on opportunities for new and expanded programs that can be delivered in a cost–effective manner and with the quality and credibility we require.

The first area of focus is faculty development. For us, faculty development includes working toward a larger full-time faculty. Importantly, however, we have created hiring guidelines for faculty and revised RHE–level guidelines for promotion and tenure. Although the revised promotion and tenure guidelines are consistent with previous expectations for research and scholarship, it is fair to say that we are more serious about expectations for scholarship than in the past. In support of these expectations, we have established a load reduction policy and a variety of programs to support faculty research. We also are encouraging our faculty divisions to look seriously at their orientation of new faculty members and their annual review processes to make sure that individuals receive clear feedback on their performance.

The emphasis on faculty development is consistent with certain core values for university professors. However, a larger and stronger faculty is essential if we are to have the support of academic units on the Athens Campus for expanded programs at the regional campuses. Given other developments at Ohio University, we simply must have faculty members who are well known by their Athens Campus colleagues and respected for their achievements. Because faculty members on regional campuses are hired and tenured at the campus, we need to create stronger linkages across the regional campuses and between the regional campuses and Athens.

One other critical aspect of faculty development deserves mention. We continue to place our primary emphasis on teaching, and our faculty members are asked to engage in a wide range of service activities that can limit the time available for traditional scholarship. Although a number of our faculty members are engaged in traditional sorts of research activities, we want to encourage our faculty to become involved in nontraditional work such as innovative approaches to teaching and involvement in Service Learning. Given our structure, we are able to reward faculty members for these activities, but we also are encouraging people to seek peer–reviewed outlets for dissemination of creative work in these areas. We are prepared to reward faculty members who choose to pursue scholarly activities that emerge directly from their teaching and service involvement.

The second area of focus relates significantly to the first. We need to strengthen our reputation, both inside and outside the university. Concentrating primarily on the internal issues, like many regional campuses, ours have been forced to combat a variety of myths and stereotypes that can limit our opportunities. In fairness, we also have occasionally engaged in certain behaviors and practices that do not meet expectations of our Athens colleagues.

Accordingly, and without going into specifics, we are endeavoring to do a better job of telling our story around the university. We also are working hard to strengthen the professionalism of many of our administrative and academic practices. It is my belief that, given the many biases we encounter, it is important for us to be impeccable in our practices and to accept the principal responsibility for making sure that people across the university know about our good work.

The third area of focus is an emphasis on partnership and collaboration. For our purposes, I use the word "partnership" to refer to our work with other units in the university, and I use the word "collaboration" to refer to our work across the units in RHE. At this point, we have a number of interesting partnerships developing, including a "one–university" School of Nursing that will include our associate degree RN programs, the Athens–based RN to BSN completion program, and a new MSN program that will be administered jointly by RHE and the Col lege of Health and Human Services. We also have new partnerships developing with the College of Education and with the School of Interpersonal Communication, and through Lifelong Learning we have a wide range of partnerships leading to new technology–mediated programs that will expand opportunities at regional campuses and at other locations.

In terms of collaboration, we are encouraging greater communication among faculty members through an annual faculty conference, meetings of our full professors and of our probationary faculty, a new Service Learning Institute, a new RHE Curriculum Committee, and a Faculty Development Committee. Faculty members from three of our campuses are working together and with the Division of Lifelong Learning to create online options within our Business Management Technology Program. Through this collaboration, we hope to increase scheduling flexibility for regional campus students and to create access to new student populations through online certificate programs.

An important program for us is our Organizational Communication major earned through the School of Interpersonal Communication. To support this major, we have hired additional faculty members, collaborating to some degree on the specialties represented across our system. Some courses are being delivered to multiple campuses through our interactive video system; faculty are collaborating on research projects; and we are also developing a technology–mediated (blended) option for the major through a collaboration among the campuses and Lifelong Learning.

There are a number of other examples of how we are trying to bring our faculty together, both to take better advantage of our faculty resources and to improve the quality of work for our faculty members. I think that collaboration, combined with effective use of technology, is critical if we are to expand opportunities at the baccalaureate and master level.

Financial Health

Finally, our fourth area of focus relates to financial health. We have overhauled our budget management approach to give the campuses relatively greater autonomy in decision making, while creating stronger incentives for increasing income and controlling costs. I will not go into details about these changes, which have been hampered somewhat by the problems with state funding of higher education, but in the long run, I am convinced that this new approach will benefit the campuses.

We also are looking for new income streams through our efforts at distance education and through an increased emphasis on contract training and external grants. We are fortunate to have adequate reserves at the present time to allow us to invest in new program development, as well.

I do believe that our independent budget is an absolutely critical element for our continued success. It is this independent budget that allows us to encourage Athens units to form partnerships with us that can generate income for them. Our financial independence also allows us some leverage when we work with various administrative units, and it helps support the perception that the campuses and Lifelong Learning are critical to entrepreneurial efforts at the university.

To summarize, I believe that our regional campus faculty and financial independence, as well as the fact that Lifelong Learning is part of RHE, provide us with excellent opportunities to respond to the changing circumstances in higher education. Through an emphasis on faculty development, stronger relationships across the university, and a more positive reputation within the university, I believe we can do a better job of meeting our mission while assuring the financial health of our system. If we respond effectively to the challenges we face, I am convinced that we are on the verge of a sort of golden age for the type of high quality, student–centered approach we bring to the world of higher education.

The Future of Ohio's Regional Campuses: Three Essential Elements

Paul L. Gaston
Provost
Kent State University

It is a pleasure to be with you this morning and to speak with you for a few minutes regarding the potential of Ohio's regional campuses.

Let me begin with the bad news. The bad news is that Ohio has under–invested in the education of its citizens. By almost any standard, we have taken an approach guaranteed to ensure a continuing brain drain, a further decline in average income, and, in general, a reduction in opportunity for the state and for its people.

The good news is that we have in place a network of educational institutions ideally situated to address this situation and turn it around. Given adequate support, Ohio's regional campuses stand ready to play a lead role in returning the state to its former eminence as a leading economic producer and source of opportunity.

Our regional campuses already have in place many of the elements most critical to such a turnaround. Their commitment to workforce education is clear. Their ties to their communities are solid. Their record of dedication to the development of their students, one by one, has earned them the respect of all Ohioans. Their schedules, their campuses, and their programs all testify to such dedication. They have proved their agility by identifying and responding to emerging needs for higher education, and they have made creative and efficient use of available resources.

Elements of Success

But there are at least three elements required if Ohio's regional campuses are to succeed in the job they are so well qualified to do. The first of these is adequate support from the state. Tuition rates that in Ohio represent access to higher education would be seen in many states as a barrier. We are passing on to our students far too high a percentage of their higher education costs, with the result that many are deterred from the pursuit of higher education, while others must either work killing hours to pay for their education or accept the burden of sustained debt.

Ohio must learn what other states know: higher education is not only a personal benefit but one critical to the welfare of the entire state. Thomas Jefferson offered us a delightful phrase when he spoke of higher education as a "publick happiness." That is what higher education should be. We need to be willing to make the investment if we are to reap the reward of a more prosperous, self–assured, and forward–looking Ohio.

The second missing element is vision. Through some curious twist of logic, a state lagging far behind in the number of its citizens earning baccalaureate degrees has exercised itself more in the prevention of program duplication than in the expansion of access to higher education. No one wants to waste state resources, but we know—and you know better than most—just how many citizens in Ohio are indeed "place bound." For reasons of employment, family obligations, or cultural ties, we have thousands of individuals in this state who are well qualified to benefit from a baccalaureate education but unable to undertake the travel or the relocation that would be required.

This is your job, I should add, not that of the community colleges. Their mission is a different one, and they perform it well. Your mission, in my view, is to *be* Ohio State, or Kent State, or Ohio University, or the University of Cincinnati in the community you serve. You bring the challenge, the breadth, the opportunity of a university to your region with an immediacy and a capacity for personal attention that distinguishes you. In my first year at Kent State, I made a point of visiting all of our regional campuses, some more than once. And I soon learned that while I thought of our campuses as Ashtabula, or Salem, or Stark, the students attending those campuses identified themselves as students of Kent State. That is how it should be.

And it was that recognition that inspired my notorious fine of one dollar for anyone who refers to a "branch" campus—or, for that matter, to the "main" campus. As I learned one morning at Salem, the campus a student chooses to undertake or continue an education *is* the "main campus" for that student. Even General Colin Powell had to pay. When he praised the good work of our Trumbull "branch," Dean David Allen thanked him and sent him a bill—which he duly paid.

The third missing element may be our capacity for describing your mission in ways that clarify what you do and that create an appropriate level of appreciation for your mission. To this end, I would propose Ernest Boyer's definition of scholarship as discovery, integration, application, and teaching.

Advantages of Regional Campuses

In each of these areas, while you face some constraints, you enjoy certain advantages. Your resources for discovery may be limited in comparison with those to be found today on campuses in Kent or Columbus, but as this AURCO 2002 conference demonstrates, with OhioLINK, an expanded capacity for computer simulation, and other available resources, there is an expanding potential for the scholarship of discovery throughout the regional campuses.

With regard to the scholarship of integration, you may enjoy an advantage. The opportunity to confer regularly with colleagues from many different disciplines represents an intellectual discipline of its own, one which many of you have exploited fully.

Let me offer an example. Having been asked to prepare in one month's time an essay for Kent State's Democracy Symposium this spring, I quickly reviewed the literature on my subject and found one book above all that addressed my interest. I read the pertinent chapter with growing appreciation for the author, whose original insights were solidly grounded in a thorough and discerning integration of both primary and secondary sources. I am convinced that the book is one of the two most authoritative on the novelist Walker Percy, and its author is a professor on the Kent State Trumbull campus.

In the scholarship of application, regional campus faculty are the true pioneers. Seeking alignments of scholarly productivity with community need, the regional campuses have created distinctive partnerships of their own. At the annual conference of the Ohio Learning Network, I attended a session offered by the educational coordinator for Cincinnati Public Television. There I learned of applications developed at Kent State Stark. The education of a provost!

Finally, there is teaching. Ohio is blessed with dedicated teachers, but the regional campuses may enjoy an edge. Your students testify to your concern with their intellectual development as individuals and to your interest in their welfare following graduation. On a recent visit to Kent State Stark, I learned from an English major there why he preferred to complete his program of study on that campus despite opportunities to transfer. It had to do with the quality of the teaching he was receiving and with his sense of an intellectual community joining faculty and students.

As we understand more clearly the mission and potential of our regional campuses, we will be in a stronger position to seek from the state the two missing elements in your future: adequate support and an appreciation for the contribution you can and should make to the baccalaureate education of Ohio's underserved citizens.

Refereed Papers

Internet Marketing: Learning 24/7 In An Online Community

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Miami University—Middletown

Abstract

Online communities fulfill a variety of needs for computer–equipped individuals. They provide links to valuable members–only technical, medical, and/or financial information. Other online communities serve as social focal points where members discuss the plans, events, thoughts, and happenings in their lives. Open 24/7, online communities can play a unique role in post–secondary education courses that appeal to Internet–savvy students. The concept of "community" as a network of interwoven relationships enhances and deepens the student to student and the student to instructor communications in a nontraditional learning experience.

Using an established Internet journal platform known as "LiveJournal.com" (www.livejournal.com), undergraduate students in an Internet Marketing course are asked to create individual accounts and continuously post entries and responses to others' entries over a sixteen week semester. With the goal of increasing the students' immersion in a "live" online community, course content is designed to meet one primary and one secondary criterion. Primarily, LiveJournal.com encourages students to openly express themselves in informal written communications, and it develops the students' skills in understanding Internet etiquette, ethics, and community citizenship regarding contextual postings of written materials. Secondarily, participation in LiveJournal.com exposes students to the Internet on a regular basis and encourages them to make use of the medium to answer marketing research questions and seek other information as required by the class. In this paper, the theory and practice of using LiveJournal.com within an undergraduate-level Internet Marketing class is presented and discussed.

Introduction

Marketing products and services on the Internet is one of the hottest topics in the marketing field today. As such, undergraduates enrolled in business or business technology programs are often eager to sign up for courses that emphasize this new marketing medium. Despite a firm grounding in general marketing principles based on the completion of previous marketing coursework, many students find themselves exposed to the two–way interactions of true online marketing for the first time while enrolled in an Internet Marketing course. Assisting students in becoming comfortable with the process of creating two–way dialogs and a sense of community on the Internet thus becomes one of the key driving forces in understanding consumers in an online environment.

The degree to which students can become comfortable in interactions over the Internet, beyond the simple sending and receiving of e-mails between friends, is an indication of their future ability to step into the shoes of a businessperson striving to establish an online presence. Establishing a loyal, repeat customer base in an online business depends on the development and maintenance of relationships that exist somewhat in the abstract because of little to no face–to–face contact between business owners and their clientele. A comprehensive Internet Marketing course focusing on online business practices will offer proactive, knowledge–building assignments that expose students to the importance of developing strong relationships with Internet customers.

Eureka: LiveJournal.com

Last summer, I was playing around on the Internet when I discovered LiveJournal.com, often referred to as "LJ." My great discovery was by accident. At LiveJournal.com, I found the personal Web page of one of my former students. His Web page was filled with greatly detailed day–by–day happenings, intellectual thoughts with musings on life, and pictures that included his family, friends, and places of travel. He also posted links, embedded inside his postings, to some unique Web sites that provided value and additional meaning to his varied insights. In looking at his journal, I was especially intrigued by his list of virtual friends: people from all over the world representing different ages, interests, and writing styles. Over the remainder of the summer, I found myself becoming more and more fascinated by LiveJournal.com as a learning community, and I started to think about how this virtual magnet for 800,000+ users in 245 countries could be incorporated into my own classroom as a collaborative learning experience.

This semester, in Internet Marketing, I added active participation in LiveJournal.com as 20% of the course grade. My goal was to provide students with a forum through which they could immerse themselves in an online community, build online relationships, and explore what is necessary to keep those unique relationships healthy and growing over a sustained period. Lecture material covering the theory and common practices of online communities was used as supplementary material to the practical experience gained through LiveJournal.com.

Basis for Success: The Use of Online Communities on College Campuses

Use of online learning in various forms on college campuses continues to increase at a rapid pace. It is rare today for a college or a university not to have some form of Intranet through which instructors make course materials available to students or where students can converse on course–related topics. On many campuses, complete online versions of academic courses and academic programs are offered. Before beginning to integrate LiveJournal.com into my Internet Marketing classroom, I performed a brief, non–exhaustive search of the literature to identify the presence of similar efforts, if they did exist. I was somewhat surprised to note that while use of the Internet and campus–based Intranets on college and university campuses is widely discussed from a variety of theoretical and practical bases, the literature on developing and implementing online communities on campus is less robust. Still, numerous papers on the topic exist, and their findings give an important indication that the use of an online community like LiveJournal.com could be successful in an innovative campus environment.

One of the more intriguing papers was published a few years ago by Catherine McLoughlin of Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia. McLoughlin stresses the need to understand that online learning is often a compromise between the design of academic approaches that are flexible enough to handle a widely divergent student population and specific enough to address the cultural needs, preferences, and learning styles of highly localized groups of individual learners (McLoughlin 1999). McLoughlin notes that the effectiveness of online learning programs can be substantially improved if one is willing to recognize and develop a community of online learners as an integral part of creating an online curriculum. The direct implication for my own work in Internet Marketing was to include a mechanism through which Miami University's Business Technology students could develop an online community of learners, one of the primary reasons for incorporating LiveJournal.com in my course.

Similar points are raised by Ann Peterson Bishop in her work on developing online communities for people from a wide variety of economic backgrounds (Bishop 2000). Bishop observes that many of the original online communities were constructed by, and to serve, privileged arenas such as "computer enthusiasts and innovators" or others with a high level of formal education and relative prosperity (Bishop 2000, 472). Her research indicates that success in developing online communities can be enhanced by recognizing the need to make the technology accessible to people of all social and economic backgrounds. Provided that Internet access is available through either public or private means, free or low–cost access to online community software and services such as LiveJournal.com on the Internet are examples of online communities that are available, unrestricted, to widely divergent groups regardless of social or economic constraints. In my Internet Marketing class, exposure of the students to several broad cross–sections of the population that participate in online communities through a LiveJournal.com format appeared to be extremely advantageous.

Many authors focus their attention on what happens after education–oriented online communities are created. For example, C–K. Looi and D. Ang report on the development of collaborative learning environments in which students work together to develop common knowledge through interactions over the Internet (Looi and Ang). Using a much more structured approach than what is described in this paper about LiveJournal.com, these authors advocate posing within a software package problems that allow students to sign on and contribute to the development of solutions. Similarly, John Hedberg and Shirley Corrent–

Agostinho describe the importance of maintaining a flexibility in the online learning process that allows the students opportunities to explore materials and formulate their own approaches to solving issues (Hedberg and Corrent–Agostinho). Taken together, these two teams of researchers offer both an opportunity and a watch–out for the use of LiveJournal.com in an Internet Marketing class. The opportunity is that students will explore the advantages of learning in an online community and are likely to propose their own approaches and solutions to the problems and the issues that are presented to the group. The watch-out is that the instructor must be diligent in knowing when some degree of structure must be imposed in order to keep learning on track.

Finally, Ronald Beghetto observes that students are not the only stakeholders in education who may take advantage of the power of online communities (Beghetto). He notes the use of various forms of electronic conferencing such as parent and teacher conferences in the public schools, student and teacher interactions and also business to business conferences that now take place on a routine basis. Beghetto states that in many of these situations, the quality of the interactions increases substantially when carried out through electronic media. Individuals and groups are brought into contact where face–to–face meetings may have been logistically difficult or impossible to achieve. In my case, the Internet Marketing class typically involves projects with external clients from the campus in other departments or individuals from within the regional business community. Could the project interactions with these external clients benefit from being included within an online community of their own? Beghetto's reasoning would imply that the answer to this question is a solid "yes." Electronic conferencing is a process of information exchange that may be readily established and followed when all parties are either part of, or amenable to joining in, an online community.

Getting Started: The Logistics of LiveJournal.com

Although LiveJournal.com has a free subscription service, each student in the Internet Marketing course was asked to become a paid LiveJournal.com member for $15 for six months of online service. Paid members receive more options and extras that are not included in the free service. For example, paid members can access an up–to–the–minute directory of other LJ users in 245 countries. For many of the students, paying for this online service was their first online purchase, an important component for class discussion in Internet Marketing. (LiveJournal.com can be purchased directly on the Web or by phone with credit card or through the mail by check or money order.) In addition, students were asked to set up their own Web page's decorative personality theme by choosing an individual user name, page colors and borders, font size and type, animated mood icons, pictures, and graphics of imaginary images to add visual interest for readers. Personal information includes e–mail address, physical city, and state, college or university, birth date, account type, and finally, lists of interests or friends. Being able to develop and design a personal Web page is easy on LiveJournal.com and adds immeasurable interest to this course assignment, especially in terms of seamlessly integrating technology into the classroom.

LiveJournal.com allows users to select from three different levels of participation. The first level of participation involves all written individual contributions to one's personal journal. Current music and an animated mood icon (happy, sad, contemplative, sleepy, productive, etc.) can be listed along with each titled, dated, and time–stamped journal entry to enrich the meaning of the writer's text. The second level of participation involves online contact with one's "friends." Friends can be added to each individual's homepage as desired. There is no limit on number and no formal or informal requirement that one's friends must be actual acquaintances. As a place for socialization, people often meet other people online through conversation or with like interests, and if there is mutual agreement between the parties, a friend can be added to an individual's homepage whenever desired. (An individual's friends page can be accessed by anyone reading his or her journal by clicking on "friends" on the upper left–hand hyperlink of the person's most recent journal entry.) The third level of participation at LiveJournal.com involves the "interests" area where each journal owner can choose from several thousand interests.

In terms of security, LiveJournal.com maintains three levels of journal access. The first level of security involves writing entries that are open to the public. The second level of security is for those who wish to keep journal entries totally private, with personal access only by codeword. The third level of security provides access only to the journal owner's selected list of friends. With three security levels of access to information, LiveJournal.com functions as a perfect mix between e–mail, instant messaging, and newsgroup participation.

On the main homepage of LiveJournal.com, there is a hyperlink button that allows browsers to randomly examine the journals of others. There have been many occasions over the last year when I have learned what is happening in the world from randomly reading the journals of others. For example, I first learned about September 11, 2001, at LiveJournal.com.

It was extremely intense experience for me to note through LiveJournal.com the number of New York posts that concerned the safety of family and friends. In later posts, others explained where they were and what they were doing at the time of the attacks. In the days and months after September 11, 2001, many journal entries provided a perceptive analysis of the events that followed the attacks, including an in–depth coverage much like the coverage presented by the national news media.

Application to the Internet Marketing Course

In Internet Marketing, each week during the semester each student was expected to write multiple entries, also called "postings," in the personal journal. Some students wrote lengthy entries, while others posted short ones. The journal posting style of each individual took shape over the first month or so. At times, people socialized with each other. There were many contributions of poetry and some fictional writing in the form of short stories. Online questionnaires were sometimes exchanged for fun, such as "Which NBC 'Friend' am I most like?" In LiveJournal.com, "blogging" creates a unique community language or code. ("Blogging" is a verb comprised of "Web logging" that is often shortened to "blogging".) For instance, "newbies" are new members of the LJ community and are often sent to the "Frequently Asked Questions" section to help them become acclimated to the social opportunities and technical help required to navigate LiveJournal.com. Other LJ words become routine over time. In Internet Marketing, the ultimate goal for each student was to become immersed within the online community. This form of relationship–building integration will most likely become a necessary component of the business model of the future.

As the course instructor, I believed that it was necessary for me to participate in the LiveJournal.com world and to integrate myself, like the students, into this dynamic concept of online community. Since I am currently working on a Ph.D. in E–Business, this course assignment was also an opportunity for me to explore this innovation in a practical application for conducting an online business. Over the semester, I completed all LiveJournal.com assignments, including the requirement to post regularly. I posted almost every day, and at times, several times a day. In fact, the grading of the LiveJournal.com assignments was based on my weekly posting word count. As a LiveJournal.com participant, I earned an automatic 92% each week, which then became a benchmark that each member of the class was expected to meet or exceed to earn an A grade for the week's assignment. In addition, I also received some extra points for responding to multiple posts of the others in the class. In other words, to facilitate class participation, I tried to be a good role model and clearly communicate my expectations, through actions, not just words. (This grading practice worked acceptably for the initial use of LiveJournal.com, but has been modified for use in future courses. See the "watchouts" section at the end of this paper.)

During the first part of the semester, as the discussion facilitator, I found that the students needed much encouragement to post regularly. Posting was not part of the student's daily routine, so it was mandatory to create a warm, inviting course environment that welcomed active participation. By the end of the semester, however, each student was posting regularly. Learning about LiveJournal.com along with the students, I was fascinated, near the end of the semester, to go to the online classroom and to expect with predictable and reliable accuracy to see certain types of content, posting lengths, and posting times from specific students. Some students posted more about personal matters than others. Students also posted at unexpected hours of the day, which is what I refer to as 24/7 online learning. For example, I noticed that some of the students posted on a regular basis between 3 and 6 a.m. in the morning, while other students were just getting up for the day and connected with the late–nighters in the online discussions. I also found that the more that I posted, in terms of number of entries, responses to others and word count, the more that the students posted, both in individual journal entries and in responses to others. Some students increased their word count to increase their grade. Other students increased their word counts for the fun and ease of posting on LiveJournal.com. Surprisingly, I also found that there was an unexpected benefit of improved writing skills, primarily due to the increased frequency of writing but also because the posting online means that one's comments may be read by everyone.

As may be readily implied from the 24–hour postings, students without direct computer access at home would potentially need to modify their study practices in order to fully participate in a LiveJournal.com online community. This was not an issue during the start of this activity because all of the Internet Marketing students had their own PCs at home. For use in classes where students do not have their own computers, the posting requirements could be modified to rely on a number of original postings and replies during the week but with less emphasis on a daily presence online. Adequate computer lab facilities on campus for students to use during the downtime between classes would then provide access for students who do not have computers at home.

At the beginning of the semester, I found myself writing about the factual details of a tenure–track professor's life. As the semester progressed, I wrote more about the intellectual challenges of teaching Marketing, Finance, and Economics, along with the Internet Marketing course. After looking at some of the responses to my postings, I also noticed an increased number of classroom debates about current events in the news. Some of the topics of conversation pushed the hot buttons of all of the participants, while other topics of conversation drew neutral or passive agreement. I also started to realize that each student in the class, including myself, was learning in–depth information about everyone else in our small subgroup of learners. Everyone learned about everyone else's work, school, and family life. Postings and responses to postings started to show considerable support for others. The students began to identify themselves as a part of something larger than the sum of their individual relationships. For instance, everyone provided an immense amount of support for a 21–year old student who summoned the courage to meet her biological mother for the first time in her life. Support was equally offered to another student who lost his management job due to downsizing. It took him nearly three months of interviewing and receiving rejection notices before securing a new, professional position.

Everyone cheered for him and posted encouragement for a new job. By the end of the semester, an online system involving a professional and a personal support network was created. Each person in LiveJournal.com felt a sense of belonging. As the class grew closer, the sophistication in writing technique and content increased. Additionally, many of the students started to improve their computer skills in posting pictures or graphics, along with the Web links that they embedded within their journals.

As the semester progressed, most of the students felt more and more that posting was not just another boring class assignment. Instead, LiveJournal.com became an online place to go to get away from the pressures of student life. Stress was relieved by venting one's problems. Many discussions centered on one's hopes and dreams for the immediate or distant future. Other online conversations focused on classroom topics and concepts concerning coursework inside and outside of Internet Marketing. In general, LiveJournal.com is an extremely active online place where something is always going on. In my experience, the best–written journals are those that deal honestly with the trivia of our ordinary lives. At the conclusion of the semester, I found that immersion in this online community happened in varying degrees for different students. To forge and to build lasting long–term relationships, the Internet Marketing students discussed the importance of physical proximity in addition to developing online relationships. To keep in touch with the others in the course, most of the students in Internet Marketing were planning to continue their participation in LiveJournal.com after the end of the semester.

The value of participating in LiveJournal.com to the Internet Marketing course, itself, may be measured in two ways. First, LJ participation significantly increased the students' comprehension of the portion of the course dealing with virtual communities, a key concept in Internet Marketing today. Even though a large percentage of the LJ communications written and read by the students were not directly related to Internet Marketing, students readily made the comparison between LiveJournal.com and business-focused discussion groups present on the Internet such as trade industry councils, consumer watchdog groups, and consumer discussion groups dealing with specific products of interest to select consumers. Second, I found an increased willingness among the Internet Marketing students (as opposed to that of students in previous classes) to branch out and explore the Internet. Having a regular presence online led students to rely more heavily on the Internet to find solutions to other problems posed within the class.

Watchouts: Facilitating Participation

During the course of the semester, I encountered three problematic issues in the use of LiveJournal.com for a classroom assignment. First, for some students, maintaining a regular posting schedule can be difficult. Posting or not posting in an online community is obvious to all members because everyone knows who is or who is not posting. Posting times tend to vary. For example, postings on the weekends tend to be less frequent for most LJers. Being a good citizen in an online community requires engaged and active participation. At various times throughout the semester, I reminded everyone about the importance of good citizenship. In addition, modifications to the posting requirements designed, in part, to make it easier for students without a computer at home to participate (discussed below) will be instituted in future uses of LiveJournal.com as a means to further encourage participation.

Second, the questions of quantity and quality about student postings becomes important when using this activity as a classroom assignment that involves a grade. In the next course for which I utilize LiveJournal.com the students will know the number of words required in total for all of the weekly postings rather than using my personal posting benchmark in number of words as a 92% guide. Knowing the expected number of weekly words to earn a specific grade will calm some fears about journal writing. Quality of posting content is another matter for which I am still searching for a solution. On occasion, I reminded the students to write about academic issues as well as personal ones. When song lyrics or online personality tests or other similar types of text have appeared for weekly posting material, I let the students know that this would not count as part of the weekly word count. Also, since I was learning about online learning myself, I wish that I would have set up a separate place on LiveJournal.com for the students to reflect and explore their feelings about learning in an online course.

Third, by involving everyone in the class in the LiveJournal.com assignment, there may be an unspoken or forced membership policy when students are asked to add other students to their friends list in order to maintain regular contact with each other. What happens if someone desires to remove a friend from the list? At times, there may be some peer pressure in posting to the responses of others in terms of praising or consoling a certain percentage level of friends per day. Although appearing to try hard to become connected, an individual who often posts with the emptiness of "Way to go!" or "Good job!" or a similar phrase may find him or herself generally ignored or not taken seriously by the others. When this happened in the Internet Marketing class, one individual discreetly pointed out such verbiage to the individual writing the meaningless responses, and the individual's responses improved.

In certain situations, there may also be a fourth watchout that is related much more to the instructor's desiring to use LJ than it is to the students involved in such an assignment. That watchout is the time required of the instructor to post original writings to the discussion and to respond to student postings. Several thoughts come to mind in addressing what is absolutely a legitimate area of concern. First, LJ takes time. Instructors will most likely not want to consider adding a significant LJ project on top of an existing course curriculum. LJ is more appropriately thought of as a replacement for, or another approach to, something that the students would be expected to learn. Thus, a portion of the time associated with creating and maintaining a well–rounded LJ project should be refunded to the instructor from a reduced workload on another aspect of the class. Second, instructors should be visible within the discussion on a frequent basis, but that does not mean that they must respond to each and every posting or that they need to answer each and every question directly. I have found that it is often advisable to respond to very specific needs directly on LJ and to bring more general topics of interest back to the classroom for discussion. This approach has the added benefit of cross–checking who was actually up–to–date on what was happening within the LJ community.

Third, instructors should weigh whether or not the added time is warranted. Although not fully tested in my own situation, I would argue that the benefits achieved in small– to medium–sized classes or in advanced or special topics classes outweigh the additional time required to support LJ. These situations often encourage additional one–to–one contact with students in any format, and LJ could even moderate the time required in some circumstances. Conversely, in very large or introductory classes where it is relatively easy for students to slip under the radar screen by not participating, or where individual communications with the instructor would be laborious, LJ may not be the best approach to use and may be untenable in terms of the instructor's time.

Expanding the Concept: Participation Beyond the Original Class

Interestingly enough, other students not enrolled in the Internet Marketing class on Miami University's Middletown campus heard about the LiveJournal.com course assignment involving "blogging." Many of them asked for free invite codes to set up their own personal Web pages and join our small online community. In addition, several others outside of the class and campus found our class Web pages through a specific individual enrolled in the class and joined in our online conversations. Some of the outsiders were other LiveJournal.com members, and others posted in our small community using names through an anonymous posting box that is available for nonmembers to add comments to an online conversation. Talk centered on everything and anything, with the one rule about suitable content revolving around the clearly written rules of the LiveJournal.com Abuse Team. If someone's journal was taken away for obscene material in written or pictorial form or there was harassing conduct by any participant toward another participant, the student would fail this portion of the course. Although from time to time, four–letter words appeared in student writing, they did not significantly detract from the intended messages. As members of an online community, LJ participants feel that they can speak and debate all of their ideas and thoughts, regardless of topic, without the fear of retribution from any source. The aforementioned situation of one student informally suggesting to another that he or she would generate better interactions within the community by putting more effort into postings was not a retaliatory act but rather a nonthreatening suggestion made between members of the community.

Also, it should be pointed out that nudity and/or graphic sexual talk or discussions about violence can be found in some of the online journals at LiveJournal.com. Discussed by the Internet Marketing students at the beginning of the class, this type of content was deemed to be unacceptable in the Internet Marketing classroom. Near the end of the semester, one student did post an inappropriate graphic of a sexual nature for her user icon. In response, I sent her a note asking her, but not requiring her, to change the user icon so as to not offend others and she promptly removed the material from her personal Web page.

In general, LiveJournal.com members were made aware of diversity in membership from Day One. As I happily found out toward the end of the semester, through its underground form of trendiness, writing in one's Web log journal can bring the largeness of the outside world into the smallness of a tiny corner of Ohio.

Applications Outside of the Business Classroom

While this paper has focused on the use of LJ as a key portion of the curriculum in an Internet Marketing class, applications to academic disciplines other than business are possible. In the current application, the theory and practice of LJ as a communications medium were under study even as the students discovered and used the online journals for themselves. In other disciplines, LJ can serve as an excellent student–driven communications medium for the discussion of important class topics. Examples may include an instructor posting a discussion topic on his or her journal, followed by students entering into a debate on the topic with or without the instructor's continued participation. Applications to literature, art, history, and science are easily imagined. An instructor could easily pair a personal Web site containing visual images, Adobe *Acrobat* ® PDF documents, or other materials with the ready–to–go facility of LJ to create a versatile read–and–discuss or view–and–discuss addition to virtually any undergraduate subject area. Subject to band width constraints, LJ even allows direct linking to graphics so a limited number of pictures and drawings could be directly embedded within a discussion question. Acting in reverse, LJ provides a platform for students to raise topics and pose questions outside of a lecture setting, i.e., the question may often be posed immediately while the student is on the computer for other purposes.

When compared with many other available discussion platforms, private chat rooms and other electronic communication links used in conjunction with undergraduate classes, LiveJournal.com may offer two advantages for use. First, LJ is within the public domain and it is highly likely that individuals not associated with the class will want to join in the discussions. Although this may initially be viewed as an annoyance by the instructor, I have found good value in incorporating these additional points of view in many of the discussions. The LJ community is diverse, enthusiastic, and well–read on an enormous variety of topics. Second, the ability of each student to design and configure his or her own journal adds to the ownership of the materials posted and is a significant encouragement to participate. Students feel more at home using LJ than they often do when using other electronic discussion formats.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, LiveJournal.com is a place where students can network with each other. Miami University's two regional campuses are commuter campuses. Students have little time to discuss the college experience with other students. On LJ, they feel the freedom to discuss anything and everything or to ask questions about campus–related issues. In terms of networking, they learn the art of making small talk, a useful skill in seeking and keeping employment.

The Origins of LiveJournal.com

LiveJournal.com was founded just over three years ago by Brad Fitzpatrick, 19 at the time. Fitzpatrick created the concept of LiveJournal.com with a few friends who thought it would be fun to combine their love of computers and the Internet with their love of writing. LiveJournal.com was founded as an open source development project where anyone is free to access the software that powers the site. Fitzpatrick, along with a couple of paid staffers and several volunteers, operates LiveJournal.com from Seattle, Washington. LJers work diligently on improvements to LJ service and to LJ site additions. As an entrepreneur, Fitzpatrick maintains separate journals, one about his day–to–day business operations and another for his personal use. Nearly 350 people read both of Fitzpatrick's journals on a regular basis. In Internet Marketing, the students were asked to read two of Fitzpatrick's journals not only to learn about the successes but also to learn about the problems of running a growing business. For example Fitzpatrick, now 22, has recently graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle. He is seriously considering selling LiveJournal.com to get a real job, but he is afraid to sell it to a large company because he is fearful that the integrity of the business will be compromised by the addition of site advertising (which he detests in no uncertain terms) and increased user fees. LiveJournal.com is his creation, and he is hesitant to part with it even though it may not fit into his future career plans. To operate LiveJournal.com, Fitzpatrick owns many Web servers, and he has a great deal of personal money tied up in the business. So, what will he do about LiveJournal.com? No one knows for sure, but as a result of his dilemma, the Internet Marketing students spent a great deal of time discussing the entry and exit barriers of running an online business.

In terms of learning about competitive analysis, Fitzpatrick is not alone in providing an easy–to–use journal suitable for online community use. LiveJournal.com has some competitors, including www.diary-x.com, www.diarist.net, www.blogger.com, and www.opendiary.com. Each of these Internet sites provides a different interpretation of an online journal, and each site has its own advantages and disadvantages. One aspect that I like about LiveJournal.com is that it is clearly run by people who differ in age from many of my students by no more than a few years. In addition, LiveJournal.com steadfastly abstains from using any kind of online advertising. Pop–up ads are annoying and can get in the way of rapid exchanges in dialog, especially for students who have slow computers. Subjectively speaking, LiveJournal.com also has a friendlier feel than some of its competitors. My students have reported that they do not feel uncomfortable writing to technical support for assistance, and they like the fact that people their own age with similar backgrounds and interests are invariably manning the help desk. As an online community, LiveJournal.com gets high marks from the Internet Marketing class for its casual nature.

Since most of the LJ journals are viewable by the public, discussions about some of the more unusual customers of LiveJournal.com have added a great deal of interest to the class. To support its online business, LiveJournal.com's large membership (800,000+) consists of 5% of permanent accounts and paid memberships, with 95% of the membership using the LJ service for free. Fitzpatrick awards permanent accounts to those who have made significant technical or business contributions to LiveJournal.com. At one point, 1,000 people a day were setting up individual Web pages at LiveJournal.com. To curb this excessive demand, Fitzpatrick instituted invite codes which were given to new members by existing members. The membership base of LiveJournal.com has mixed feelings about Fitzpatrick's decision. It is currently under review. The up–to–the–minute stats page that is maintained by LiveJournal.com is fascinating in terms of understanding the customer, one of the key components in marketing any product or service. It details, using numerical data, significant facts about the customers of LiveJournal.com. For marketing research purposes, the customer profile data display the exact numbers and percentages of men and women, their ages, and their locations by state among its demographic data. (Fitzpatrick does not sell this marketing research information to outside agencies.) Customer satisfaction, nearing 100% at LJ, is becoming almost mandatory in a business world where the customer comes first. Although at times Fitzpatrick scoffs at the value of marketing research and customer service, as a business person, he is learning some lessons about customers the hard way. It is wonderful for the students to see someone, so much like themselves, struggling to achieve business success. The students in the Internet Marketing class have also been able to discuss ways, using the real–life examples found in LiveJournal.com, to improve the online company's bottom line. This is of critical importance because making money in an online business is difficult, at best, these days.

Partially based on demographics and partially based on owner interest, LiveJournal.com's future goals are very ambitious and extremely challenging. First, members of the online community would like to develop an index that involves a connected network of journals. Second, members of the online community intend to design, create, and develop a collective intelligence factor to solve computer software and hardware problems. Third, Fitzpatrick is creating "Fotobuilder," a separate business that will involve posting photography galleries. At some point, Brad would like his newest business to directly link with LJ in a way where there is technical differentiation from his competitors. Work toward achieving these goals is in progress. LiveJournal.com is setting an excellent example of the process of product development work in today's rapidly changing and increasingly complex world of business.

Conclusions

Asking the Internet Marketing students to immerse themselves in an online community created a shared goal of learning in the class. At the conclusion of the semester, I observed distinct and improved levels of initiative, creativity, and critical thinking skills for each student. Participation in the LiveJournal.com assignment was not only fun but also led the entire class to ask, explore, and answer questions that lent significant enhancement to their knowledge. Learning about the importance of an online community as it relates to the topic of Internet Marketing was just as valuable as learning to actually function inside an online community. LiveJournal.com is a hands–on experience. In order to achieve the maximum benefit from using it as a course assignment, the instructor must participate both as a teacher and as a student. As a 24/7 learning environment, there is no other classroom like the one that can be created in LiveJournal.com. More importantly, learning from a globalized online community, customized and tailored to the individual, can be creatively crafted for many subject areas beyond the world of business.

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Biography

Susan A. Baim is an assistant professor of Business Technology (BTE) on the Miami University Middletown campus. She joined the faculty in August 1999, teaching marketing, Internet marketing, economics, online economics, finance, and management courses in the university's two–year BTE program. Susan earned her MBA in Marketing Management from the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1998 and is currently studying for her Ph.D. in E–Business through Capella University, also in Minneapolis. She was named a Service Learning Ambassador at Miami University in 2000. Susan has a strong interest in distance education programs and how they may be applied to two–year academic programs. She and her students in the BTE program are also known for their customer satisfaction survey work for police departments and other governmental agencies in Southwestern Ohio. Readers are invited to view her own LiveJournal homepage at http://www.livejournal.com/users/baimsa. On her homepage, the hyperlink labeled "Friends" will allow browsing the journal entries of several Miami University Middletown campus BTE students. Baim may be contacted at baimsa@muohio.edu.

TeamBTE: Evolving Through Business on Miami University's Regional Campuses

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Abstract

This paper presents a discussion of a Miami University branch campus organization known as TeamBTE. TeamBTE originated as a means of enhancing communications among students, faculty, staff, BTE program advisors, BTE alumni, and local business leaders associated with the two–year Business Technology (BTE) program. Operating on Miami University's Middletown and Hamilton branch campuses, TeamBTE provides electronic communications in the form of bi–weekly electronic newsletters to all interested parties.

The basic premises behind establishing TeamBTE will be discussed. A series of typical TeamBTE campus activities, including guest speakers, fundraisers, and other similar activities, will illustrate the steps taken to build interest in the organization during its initial development. Thoughts on enhancing the departmental, campus, and community roles of TeamBTE in future years will also be presented.

Introduction

Two–year post–secondary academic institutions are faced with the challenging task of determining how to attract students from a population pool that is becoming increasingly more diverse. Traditional students have not disappeared from campus. Lower in overall enrollment percentage, these traditional students have been joined by an increasing number of nontraditional students who view the process of obtaining a post–secondary degree in very different terms. These relative newcomers include students who work and have families while attending college. These individuals, therefore, have significantly restricted time schedules that make attending classes and interacting informally with faculty, peers, and others in the business community substantially difficult. The presence of many older, returning students and also students who may be looking for specific coursework based on personal interests rather than seeking a formal degree adds a final layer of complexity to a student population that is anything but traditional in composition.

This paper serves to explore the initial efforts of the two–year Business Technology (BTE) Department at Miami University to address one of the most pressing needs inherent in serving a diverse student population. Specifically, BTE needs to provide accurate, timely, and interest–building business communications to keep all stakeholders informed and involved in the learning process. The need for new methods of communicating with students and involving them in department activities is particularly acute due to the department's ongoing efforts to refine its programs and attract a broader range of students. A new organization created within the BTE Department is working to actively engage students in the process of business outside of a traditional classroom setting.

Introducing TeamBTE

The TeamBTE concept was developed as a means of engaging all stakeholders in the Business Technology program in a unified effort. Stakeholders include students, faculty, campus administrators, BTE program advisors, department staff, BTE alumni, and members of the local and regional business communities served by Miami University's campuses in Middletown and Hamilton, Ohio. Even the subset of business community members was diverse, with representatives from for–profit businesses, nonprofit organizations, and governmental agencies all taking an interest in the BTE program. The name "TeamBTE" was coined to evoke a spirit of cooperation and active involvement among all stakeholders, many of whom rarely encountered each other through the pursuit of their normal daily responsibilities.

While TeamBTE's primary mission is to foster communications, the original intent of developing the organization also included moving beyond communications to offer creative activities and innovative programs of interest to students and others involved in the BTE program. Activities may be classified according to three categories: general business communications, marketing communications, and service learning programs. Under general business communications, the primary activity at the present time is publication of TeamBTE's bi–weekly electronic newsletter, *E–BITS*. Under marketing communications, TeamBTE members and BTE marketing students have been involved in a variety of projects, including the development of promotional videos and a TeamBTE pamphlet to help explain the short– and long–term goals of the organization. In a combined marketing communications and fund–raising effort, TeamBTE logo T–shirts have been designed and sold. Under service learning programs, a team of students has interviewed approximately forty BTE faculty members and written up the interviews as a BTE Department service learning project to provide better information on faculty members' specialties and interests. In a service learning project designed to benefit BTE students across the entire campus, TeamBTE has also sponsored a student–developed E–mentoring program that will be initiated soon. Bridging all of these activities, TeamBTE's Events Planning Team has worked hard to provide a series of fund–raising, academic, and social events to build a strong spirit of community among all stakeholders in the Miami University BTE program.

An organization such as TeamBTE has never existed before, either formally or informally, on the Miami University campuses. Ultimately, this orga nization will serve as an important driving force for the development of a more cohesive Business Technology program. TeamBTE was conceived during the summer of 2001. As the faculty advisor, I have been responsible for developing the organization charter for TeamBTE and the marketing strategy for its launch. Now, I am working with a core group of individuals to build stakeholder interest in the group.

The TeamBTE Business Plan

TeamBTE is a new campus organization, operating primarily over the Internet, and designed to foster communications needed to define and enhance the future programs for Miami University's BTE Department. To establish a succinct operating platform for TeamBTE, formal business and marketing plans were developed and a short slogan or byline was created to help people instantly recognize the purpose of the organization. The slogan "Evolving Through Business" has proven highly effective at clarifying the purpose of TeamBTE on and off campus.

TeamBTE's Products and/or Services

The end product and service of TeamBTE is information which will ultimately come in a variety of forms but will be centralized around the organization's biweekly electronic newsletter *E–BITS*. A typical example of the newsletter contains a message from the advisor, who also is the official editor of the newsletter, plus a variety of topics of potential interest to individuals associated with the BTE program. In an effort to keep the information fresh, topics are rotated in and out of the newsletter. For example, Volume I, Issue 2, contains a question–and–answer column on computer usage called "Technobytes" that is authored by BTE faculty member Rob Sommer. Sommer's column encourages students to send in their computer questions to be answered online in an upcoming issue. This column alternates issues with a management and career development column by BTE department chairman Stan Spencer. Similar in format to "Technobytes," Spencer's column also asks for questions to be answered in future issues.

An electronic newsletter format was chosen because it is characteristic of the business communications used by contemporary practitioners. Up–front design work for the electronic newsletter was accomplished during Miami University's 2001 Summer Session with assistance from several students in the BTE 105 Introduction to Marketing class. Database software selection was based on identifying a package that would allow personalized e–mail communications to be sent to a diverse group of campus and noncampus contacts in a fully automated mode. The requirement that all communications be personalized (i.e., addressed specifically to the recipients) precluded the use of already–available campus technologies such as the listserv functions available on the Miami University Qualcomm Eudora e–mail system or the bcc functions available on typical Microsoft or Netscape e–mail packages. At the same time, the software package selected needed to be fully compatible with Miami University's e–mail and file server structure so that the University's Internet access connections could be used for high–speed transfers of data.

GoldMine 5.0 ® from GoldMine Software, the selected product, fulfills all of the necessary requirements and is straightforward for students. Brainstorming discussions with the Summer BTE 105 class culminated in the database being designed to allow the selection of subgroups of newsletter recipients based on student/faculty/business community member status, present or former affiliation with the university, primary campus location, and several other parameters. The current TeamBTE database contains over 1,000 names of individuals associated with the BTE program on Miami University's two branch campuses.

With the database in place, students involved in TeamBTE activities ranging from marketing to operations are now able to participate in a variety of individual and team–based projects designed to expose them to the power and versatility of electronic communications and the organizational objectives of TeamBTE. Students have explored sending out general announcements regarding TeamBTE along with the bi–weekly issues of the electronic newsletter. There is sufficient flexibility in the TeamBTE project to allow students to pursue specific aspects of electronic communications that may be of primary interest to them. For example, several students are concerned with developing the expertise to write text suitable for use in an electronic publication. (Such text often needs to be briefer and less complex than text to be read by more conventional means.) Other students are concerned with understanding how to effectively target desired subcategories of individuals in the database and in making efficient use of the flexibility of the software. A final group of students is tracking marketing research data on those who receive the electronic publications. These students will be responsible for collecting membership dues for TeamBTE and modifying the database to account for other inputs coming back from the newsletter readership.

Positioning of Products/Services

Subscriptions to the electronic newsletter of TeamBTE are free to anyone who desires to receive this publication. Once the costs of purchasing the software were covered, sending out incremental copies of the newsletter is essentially cost–free. TeamBTE leadership desired to make the information disseminated by the organization readily accessible to anyone in much the same manner as other campus publications but with two important differentiating factors. First, *E–BITS* is the only such publication to go out electronically to its membership and others on a regular basis. Second, *E–BITS* stands alone in terms of the breadth of coverage for off–campus individuals. The electronic communications made possible through TeamBTE make it possible to reach business owners and managers without incurring postage costs every other week, a funding issue that stops the broad circulation of nonelectronic newsletters from many campus organizations.

As noted by Scott Tillett (Tillett 49), this cost advantage and the freedom to operate that it brings are beginning to be recognized as the biggest side–benefits of using the Internet for electronic communications programs in education. Tillett notes that fancier is not necessarily better when it comes to the educational use of the Internet. Simple, easy–to–use sites and newsletters or other communications that download quickly and accurately are the most useful for delivering the information that is needed in an academic setting. Case studies available in the literature, including one bicultural study by Chadwick Hilton and Naoki Kameda, also support the same findings and document an added advantage to keeping electronic communications and Internet–related materials simple and straightforward: simpler materials are best for reaching people of diverse cultural backgrounds where language barriers may alter the interpretations of the materials used (Hilton and Kameda 181). The authors observe that interactions in international business in particular can benefit from a well–thought–out position on using electronic communications to augment coursework materials. Ultimately, one of TeamBTE's long–term goals is to capture one–on–one business interactions on a global scale.

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Involving TeamBTE

Given that its primary strength is innovation in business communications, there are many opportunities for TeamBTE to assist Miami University's BTE program in differentiating itself from its major competitors. On a biweekly basis, *E–BITS* is able to trumpet the latest information about the BTE Department and its programs to its primary stakeholders and potential customers through the local business community. The BTE program can excel not only in terms of the quality of coursework provided but also in terms of providing external opportunities for students to interact with members of the business communities surrounding Middletown and Hamilton. Program visibility is high, and business owners and managers are more likely to seek out assistance and interaction with the two branch campuses due to their unique local positioning as an integral part of each community. This is an opportunity that can be enhanced by careful planning and the execution of community–oriented programs at the two branch campuses. TeamBTE is a significant new tool that may be used to heighten awareness of BTE activities on campus and within the local business communities. Properly executed, TeamBTE's electronic newsletter and the other online communications approaches to come will provide rapid links for asking questions, sending out information, and generally upgrading the familiarity of all parties with the BTE program.

TeamBTE has some inherent internal weaknesses and also faces some external threats. The primary weakness that could hinder the ongoing existence of TeamBTE is the lack of continuing interest in the group by students who are currently enrolled in the program. TeamBTE must appeal to these students, and it must offer something of value to them in order to be worth a portion of their hectic schedules. This means that TeamBTE must offer ways to increase job contacts, ways to determine what courses are most relevant to each student, ways to increase knowledge of business topics and practices not learned in class, and so forth. Threats to the BTE program, and thus TeamBTE, at Miami University include competing programs offered by other colleges and universities, plus reductions in enrollment and funding due to changes in the local and state economies. The key to addressing these threats is to look at the BTE program in terms of continuous improvement. It is mandatory for the faculty and staff to keep a critical eye not only on the competition but also internally on the scope and quality of the program. Innovation and relevance to current business needs will be critical over the coming years as the BTE program expands its influence within its market. TeamBTE has been instituted to act as the department's eyes and ears to monitor change in today's world of business.

Building Customer Loyalty—Online Community

Customer loyalty is a critically important concept for TeamBTE. This is an organization that functions based on developing close relationships with all of the stakeholders associated with the BTE program. As a communications vehicle, *E–BITS*, the electronic newsletter can only be effective if people find it of value and return to read it. This requires careful attention to customer loyalty and any concerns that may arise from the organization's publications. In *E–BITS*, TeamBTE continuously attempts to solicit comments from the membership and also to provide opportunities for the membership to contribute to the newsletter. Opting out is easy to do, only an e–mail to the organization is needed, and the process was set up this way to give an early warning to TeamBTE if readers start to find the information to be of little use.

Customer loyalty will ultimately hinge on the content of TeamBTE's programs and communications. If students find the organization useful when selecting courses or looking for a job, if faculty and administrators find the membership gives helpful guidance on new program directions, and if local business owners and managers find assistance in moving their own organizations forward, then TeamBTE loyalty will be maintained. It is a primary goal of the faculty advisor and the student officers of the organization to monitor the pulse of all activities closely so as to enhance customer loyalty whenever possible.

If functioning as intended, TeamBTE will be a significant driver in creating an online community for the BTE program where none existed before. Even in the earliest stages, TeamBTE received significant positive comments from new members who noted that something of this nature has been needed for a long time. Everyone working on the TeamBTE concept acknowledges that an online community can easily decay and die if the interaction between participants and the information transferred is not sufficient to maintain ongoing interest. The initial TeamBTE model predicts success, but the proof will be generated in the customer satisfaction numbers and the performance measurement indicators in the coming semesters.

Present Efforts and Next Steps

As stated previously, TeamBTE will thrive and be able to influence program directions and offerings within the BTE organization only to the extent that it engages the students, faculty, business owners, and other stakeholders in activities of value. Currently, TeamBTE is currently in an experimental or range–finding mode in which multiple types of activities are under investigation to determine which activities will add value, attract good participation, and become TeamBTE standards.

During the fall and spring semesters of the 2001–2002 academic year at Miami University, TeamBTE partnered with the students enrolled in a BTE 105 Introduction to Marketing class on the Middletown campus to develop and initiate seven new activities to increase interactions between BTE stakeholders on and off campus. These students were typically enrollees in the two–year BTE program at Miami University, although a few students were taking the class in conjunction with other degree programs or for personal interest. For virtually all of the students, this class was their first exposure to formal marketing principles. BTE 105 students were required to perform one major independent or team–based research project as part of their course requirements, and the collaborative work done with TeamBTE served to meet this project need. Specific projects conducted include the seven following items.

1. Event Planning: During the Fall Semester, a team of four Marketing students, and during the Spring Semester, a team of five marketing students elected to participate on the Events Planning Team. The mission of each team was to develop a series of events to be held over the course of the semester to build interactions between current and prospective TeamBTE members. Left to the discretion of the students, but with substantial faculty advice, the selection of events brought forward included fund–raisers, guest speakers, and social events. Each student team was responsible for organizing each event and conducting it under the TeamBTE banner for the benefit of anyone interested in learning more about TeamBTE. Of the events scheduled, the fund–raising activities involving Krispy Kreme ® doughnuts were undoubtedly the most popular. Other popular activities included hosting guest speakers from local businesses, most with stories to tell regarding entrepreneurial activities. The Events Planning Teams, utilizing a network of sales activities, also served as the funding agents for other TeamBTE activities across the semester. In total, the two Events Planning Teams raised nearly $2,500 over the academic year.

2. E–BITSNewsletter: The TeamBTE electronic newsletter, *E–BITS*, benefited tremendously during the initial fall semester from articles and features written by students enrolled in the BTE program. Student articles were considered so critical to engaging prospective new students that the effort to include student reporters and other staffers on *E–BITS* was redoubled for the spring semester. A highly talented crew of three students took up this challenge and wrote a terrific series of articles from the students' points of view. In addition, one student elected to participate by furnishing original, hand–drawn cartoons for each issue of *E–BITS*. Choosing a recurring "Everyman" theme, the cartoonist looked at everything from the collapse of Enron to major league player salary negotiations. All of the articles and cartoons were in good taste and professionally prepared. Faculty comments on the articles and cartoons indicated that the material was not only timely but also insightful and added a new dimension to *E–BITS*.

3. T–shirt Design and Sales: What on–campus organization does not have at least one item of logo clothing to sell in order to build name recognition of and knowledge of the group's activities? TeamBTE was in need of such an item; a seven–member T–shirt Design and Sales Team was pulled together. The goal was to design a simple T–shirt logo that would be popular with TeamBTE members and then to sell the T–shirts as a fund–raising and promotional project. Students involved in this project needed to come up with a design that would appeal to the proper market segment: members and prospective members of TeamBTE. They also needed to search out a reasonably–priced source for the merchandise, develop a project timeline, and then devise a marketing plan to sell the T–shirts. Over a several week period, sales were promoted through a combination of on–campus promotions and articles in the *E–BITS.*

4. E–Mentoring by TeamBTE: The concept for the e–mentoring program was derived from an article on junior mentoring that appeared in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* (Lewis). The gist of the article concerned programs in which younger, computer–literate employees mentor their older, less computer–savvy co–workers. In adapting this concept to TeamBTE, a two–member student team was formed and was asked to develop a plan for e–mentoring that could be applied to the resources available to TeamBTE. The students elected to develop a three–step e–mentoring program that would be available to Miami University BTE students through a specially–designed Web page. As a first step, using components of a model developed at The Ohio State University, the student team focused on delivering student–to–student mentoring by developing a questionnaire to pair current BTE student mentors with incoming student "mentees" based on interests and areas of concern. Initial contacts were designed to occur over the Internet, with face–to–face meetings established after mentor and mentee pairs agreed to work together. As a second step, the work on this project will eventually involve extending the mentor and mentee relationships to include mentors from the local business community who can assist BTE students with their careers. Similar to the insight provided by the *Star Tribune* article, the third step in the e–mentoring program will involve student mentors assisting business owners in better understanding current business issues and trends.

5. Faculty Interviews: The BTE program at Miami University is spread across two campuses and also includes multiple courses taught at several area high schools. With such a large geographic dispersion of the faculty, it is virtually impossible for students to get to know everyone who teaches in the program. For this project, four student team members each interviewed ten full–time or adjunct faculty members in the BTE program. They learned about their business specialties but also something about each faculty member as a person. Students wrote up their interviews, asking faculty members for content approval and comments, and secured a digital photo of each faculty member interviewed. These faculty interviews are scheduled to run in *E–BITS*, can be used in department brochures, and will ultimately find a home on the BTE department's Web site.

6. TeamBTE Pamphlet: As TeamBTE works to integrate itself more completely into the business communities surrounding Miami University's branch campuses, there is a continuing need to contact individual businesses to explain the potential benefits of working with the students and faculty of the BTE Department. Although good marketing practices would ideally require that these contacts be made in person, there are always situations in which a personal contact is not possible. In this project, a team of two students worked to develop a professional–quality pamphlet that could be mailed to prospective business contacts or left with a business owner when making a personal visit. The pamphlet briefly introduces the concept of TeamBTE and lists the advantages of membership. A free subscription to *E–BITS* is offered along with contact information for the TeamBTE faculty advisor. The student team members choosing to work on this project found themselves quickly immersed in the theory of brochure and pamphlet design, printing, mailing, and other tasks. The end result was a full–color pamphlet that has received high marks in its initial usage.

7. **TeamBTE Video:** The most ambitious project undertaken to date has been the development of a video to market TeamBTE to potential student and business community members. TeamBTE representatives wanted a video that could be shown at area high schools, during college recruiting activities on the Miami University branch campuses, or to local business and community groups. Through an unusual coincidence, one student in the Spring Semester BTE 105 class was a professional videographer with his own studio in the Middletown area. He jumped at the opportunity to participate in this project and was joined by a team of seven other students who were eager for the chance to work with someone in that profession. The end product of this team effort turned out to be a set of two videos, each of which carries the basic message of TeamBTE. One video is based around a nightly newscast theme, while the other is a takeoff on the popular network television show *Unsolved Mysteries*. These videos, available as VHS tapes or CDs, will allow TeamBTE members to promote the organization.

The aforementioned projects have helped TeamBTE to expand its membership and to work toward building additional communications links with for–profit businesses, nonprofit organizations, and governmental agencies. Future efforts are likely to include developing additional fund–raising or marketing materials (for example, a TeamBTE calendar is currently under construction) and specific projects to link businesses with students who have an interest in a particular field. TeamBTE has also been encouraged to participate more heavily in the college recruiting process, especially including visits to area high schools that have traditionally been key feeder schools for the two–year programs on Miami University's branch campuses. Extending TeamBTE's role to include working with incoming students who have a potential interest in majoring in a business discipline would be a natural fit for the more experienced individual or business in helping the less experienced individual in business.

Conclusions

In one academic year, TeamBTE grew from a concept to a fully–functioning campus organization with a membership of 1,000 individuals. Through the hard work of a number of individuals, TeamBTE's mission and vision have been clarified, and several TeamBTE activities are in place to broaden student–to–student, faculty–to–student, and business–to–student interactions. The key to maintaining the organization in its vital, growth–oriented state is to stay in touch with the latest business issues and trends and the desires of its diverse stakeholders. Through its continuing activities, TeamBTE is positioned to strongly contribute to the future success of the Business Technology program on both of Miami University's branch campuses.

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Biography

[Editor's note: See previous article.]

Directing Student Learning Outside the Classroom

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Abstract

Resources abound on the subject of classroom activities. As teachers, it is very important that we consider ways to better utilize our time in class. We should be familiar with and use good classroom practices. It follows that if we expect students to spend more time studying outside of class than in class, perhaps we should reevaluate what we are asking them to do. Could we help them make better use of their time?

In this paper I will present activities that I have students do outside of class. These activities are based on results from physics education research but are applicable to other subject areas. Some activities use techniques from the book *Just–in–Time Teaching* and *Blackboard* course management software. The purpose is to see if Web–based activities have increased the students' learning.

Background

For six years I have taught primarily an algebra– and trigonometry–based college physics sequence. I began teaching the course in a traditional style of lecture, homework, and tests. To improve student learning, I have incorporated the results of physics education research into my teaching. Physics education research is based on student understanding of science content. In an article in the *American Journal of Physics*, Lillian C. McDermott, a leader in this area, lists six research–based generalizations on teaching. The generalizations and comments from the paper follow:

> 1. An essential element for learning assessment is introducing questions that demand qualitative reasoning and verbal expression: "We have found that an effective approach

is to challenge students with qualitative questions that cannot be answered through memorization, to help them learn how to respond to such questions, and to insist that they form the necessary reasoning by not supplying them with answers."

2. Interpreting physics formalism (graphs, diagrams, algebra, etc.) and relating it to the real world requires repeated practice: "Analogies obvious to instructors are often not recognized by students."

3. Directly addressing conceptual difficulties must be done in multiple contexts if they are to be overcome: "Our experience indicates that warning students not to make particular errors is ineffective."

4. To predict and explain real–world phenomena, students need to construct qualitative models: "We have found that an effective strategy for helping students understand the relationships and differences among concepts is to engage them actively in the model–building process."

5. Scientific reasoning skills must be expressly cultivated and developed, step–by–step: "Conceptual models in physics are often inseparably linked with particular lines of reasoning. Hence, instruction should address both concurrently."

6. To develop a functional understanding, students must be intellectually active. "Meaningful learning requires the active mental engagement of the learner. The lecturer, however, cannot do their thinking for them."

Over the years I have adjusted what I do inside the classroom by using the above ideas, and it is working well. As I reflected on what I was trying to accomplish, I saw the need to extend what I was doing in the classroom to activities outside the classroom. There are several reasons for the changes I have made in my teaching. The first was that asking qualitative questions and giving students time to think and respond in class left too little time to do the other activities I thought were important. Second, I wanted to give the students the repeated practice needed to understand the algebra, graphs, and diagrams of physics and address more of their conceptual misunderstandings. The third reason for the changes was to direct how students spend their time studying physics.

Over the years students have said to me, "I spent over an hour trying to work this homework problem and couldn't do it." Most problems should not take over fifteen minutes to work, so I tell them that if they are not making any progress, they should stop on that particular problem until they can ask for help. They might be making a math error or misunderstand some aspect of the problem. For example, a common mistake in converting units is converting centimeters squared to meters squared (cm^2 to m^2). If a student makes this mistake at the beginning of a problem, all of the other steps could be correct, but they would not get the right answer. Students would also say, "I studied for *x* number of hours for this test and did not do as well as I should have." Not doing better is frustrating for students and me. Fourth, the student's inability to discern the main points in their reading and inability to apply what they read created problems. Sometimes the author of the text may not explain things well, or the author assumes that students have some prior knowledge that they do not possess. All of these factors motivated me to rethink and reevaluate homework assignments.

Changing Homework Assignments

Traditionally in physics, math, and engineering courses, students are given homework problems and are expected to be able to solve them based on material covered in the lecture, the textbook, and examples. As a former student and a teacher, I know this is often difficult. Physics education research shows that quantitative problem solving does not necessarily lead to a conceptual understanding. The textbook problems do not address some of the misconceptions that students have about physics.

Asking students the right questions, at the right time, is a way to help students overcome these problems and learn the material. It also saves them time. After teaching for a while, one becomes familiar with common mistakes or misunderstandings that students share. As I began to give more thought to how students were spending their time outside of class, I thought that using the Internet would be a way to direct students without using more class time. To maximize student learning, I wanted the out–of–class activities or homework to be based on the results of physics education research.

In past years I posted course syllabi and homework solutions on the Web for students. The University of Cincinnati adopted *Blackboard* and made it available to all faculty during winter quarter of the 2000–01 school year. *Blackboard* is a Web–based, course management software package with assessment capabilities. Students can take quizzes and return their answers over the Web and receive immediate responses if they get an answer right or wrong for multiple choice questions. The software grades the quiz. For essay questions, the results are easily available to the instructor for reading and correcting online. During winter and spring quarters the first year that *Blackboard* was available, I used it to post course information and administer three or four quizzes per quarter.

For the 2001–02 school, year I expanded the use of the Web by posting more quizzes and incorporating ideas from *Just–In–Time Teaching* (*JiTT*). The premise of this book is to have students do Web–based assignments and submit them electronically prior to class. An instructor can review the assignments to see where the students are having problems and use this information to adjust the classroom activities. Using *Blackboard* is one of the easiest and most effective ways to do this. Students at the University of Cincinnati have *Blackboard* accounts automatically setup when they enroll in physics. With *Blackboard's* assessment and grading capabilities, the assignments are easy to administer. I used *JiTT* pre–lecture quizzes called "warmups" to give students multiple exposure to the material by having them read the material before class and to give them some idea of what was important in the reading assignment. These were followed by post–lecture quizzes, including questions that were intermediate steps in assigned quantitative problems where I knew past students had difficulties. Each warmup and quiz consisted of only three questions. One warmup and one quiz would be given per week except for the three weeks that a test was scheduled. Students were required to do the assignments by a specific date and time. For instance, if the class started at 10:00, the assignment would be due at 9:00 to give me an hour to review their answers. The warmups and quizzes counted approximately 10% of their final grade.

Table 1. Survey results for winter quarter 2002

Church Survey = CS
Crawford and Curtis Survey = CCS

1. I had a difficult time learning how to use Blackboard

15 CS	0 CCS	%Strongly agree or agree
15 CS	2 CCS	% Neutral
70 CS	98 CCS	% Disagree or strongly disagree

2. I feel comfortable using Blackboard now.

70 CS	100 CCS	%Strongly agree or agree
15 CS	0 CCS	% Neutral
15 CS	0 CCS	% Disagree or strongly disagree

3. I possess the computer skills necessary to use Blackboard.

90 CS	100 CCS	%Strongly agree or agree
10 CS	0 CCS	% Neutral
0 CS	0 CCS	% Disagree or strongly disagree

4. I have Internet access at home.

75 CS	95 CCS	%Strongly agree or agree
5 CS	0 CCS	% Neutral
20 CS	5 CCS	% Disagree or strongly disagree

5. Access to a computer to use Blackboard is a problem for me.

10 CS	7 CCS	%Strongly agree or agree
15 CS	13 CCS	% Neutral
75 CS	80 CCS	% Disagree or strongly disagree

6. I have used Blackboard to look at homework solutions.

80 CS	N/A CCS	%Strongly agree or agree
0 CS	N/A CCS	% Neutral
20 CS	N/A CCS	% Disagree or strongly disagree

7. The quizzes on Blackboard have helped my learning.*

45 CS	35 CCS	%Strongly agree or agree
30 CS	60 CCS	% Neutral
25 CS	5 CCS	% Disagree or strongly disagree

*A similar statement in the Crawford and Curtis survey was "Using Blackboard enhances my learning."

Results and Student Comments

Nineteen students participated in a survey I gave at the end of winter quarter 2001. Of that number, 74% thought that *Blackboard* was a worthwhile learning tool, and 89% used it to look at homework solutions.

During the 2001–02 year, what I attempted was too ambitious for both the students and myself. Although *Blackboard* is easy to use, it was difficult to find the time to do all that I wanted. The students also complained about having to use *Blackboard* so often. They did not like having assignments due twice a week.

Twenty students responded to a survey about their experience using *Blackboard* at the end of the 2002 winter quarter. The format for this survey was taken from Crawford and Curtis in their article "Using the *Blackboard*–Online." Student responses were not as favorable as in the prior year. For comparison, I have included some of Crawford and Curtis' survey results from **Table 1** on the students' perceptions of *Blackboard* for a Web–enhanced course.

Questions one and two relate to learning to use *Blackboard*—70% did not have a difficult time and 15% did. At the beginning of the quarter I gave the students a five–minute introduction to *Blackboard* and a one–page handout. I knew that most of the students had previously used it, and I offered to help them outside of class if they had questions.

Almost all of the students have the computer skills to use *Blackboard* as determined from question three.

The results from questions four and five reveal that access to a computer and the Internet is not a problem for 75% of the students, but remains a problem for the remaining 25%. Clermont College has open computer labs with access to the Internet for students.

Question six revealed that 80% of students looked at homework solutions posted on *Blackboard* compared to 89% the previous year. A hard copy of the solutions was also available on reserve in the library both years.

Question seven was the most important question—did *Blackboard* help student learning? The results were disappointing. Only 45% thought that the quizzes helped their learning; 30% were neutral, and 25% said that it did not help. There could be several reasons why 25% did not think that it helped. Perhaps these students understood the material and did not need the extra work or their response reflects the students' misunderstanding of the purpose of the assignments and why particular questions were chosen.

The Crawford and Curtis survey shows more favorable results for learning and using *Blackboard* and having access to the Internet. For question seven about student learning, a direct comparison cannot be made between the Crawford and Curtis survey and mine because we did not use *Blackboard* in the same way. Even though the Crawford and Curtis used *Blackboard* differently, only 35% of the students thought that *Blackboard* helped their learning.

Some of the students' comments were:

> Ditch *Blackboard* altogether.
>
> Sometimes it is difficult to log on or submit the quizzes.
>
> I like having the homework solutions available.
>
> Having more assignments would be helpful.
>
> Good tool to use to contact other class members.
>
> It has taken 20 to 30 minutes for me to log on at times. The same physics knowledge could have been acquired through study without the HASSLE of using a computer. The computer offers no advantage to comprehending the material. It is really in the way of me getting to the information I need.
>
> If students had to use a computer at school rather than at home, it was inconvenient since Clermont College is a commuter campus and some students had to leave for work.
>
> The assignments were due too frequently.
>
> If interactive animations were added, as used in class, the assignments would have been more worthwhile.

As a comparison to someone else who has looked at the benefit of using the Internet for instruction, Todd Hamilton refers to a study in the *Journal of Chemical Education* in his article, "The Internet: Another Teaching Tool or Panacea for Education?" This study investigated the impact of Internet–based chemistry tools in four introductory chemistry courses. The use of the Internet–based tools was voluntary. Approximately 30% of the 629 students enrolled used the tools. Of the students who used the Internet, 77% felt that the Website made no difference in their understanding.

Conclusions

There are still problems with students having access to technology and the technology working, but I think that the effort to have students use the Web is worthwhile. Students at UC Clermont sent a letter to the faculty encouraging them to use *Blackboard*. Students like having syllabi, course material, homework solutions, and so forth available online.

Students like having the assignments on the Web as an option and not a requirement. For a commuter campus, students who did not have access to the Internet at home did not like having assignments that made them stay at school beyond the regular class time.

From the student's perspective, only 45% believed the Web–based assignments helped their learning. From my perspective, technology can help structure learning outside the classroom. A further study could explore if learning actually did improve.

In my optimism I did not allow enough time to accomplish all that I had planned. Some things I will do differently in the future are:

1. Explain in depth and give more introduction to *Blackboard* and what I am trying to accomplish by using it.
2. Make some of the assignments voluntary and count them as extra credit.
3. Add animations to the Web assignments. This would make better use of the capability of the technology.
4. Remember to allow twice as much time to accomplish my plan (or reduce my plan by half.)

As faculty try different ideas to see what works with Web–enhanced courses, we should remember that the web is a tool. In his article, Hamilton reminds us that we should "pause and consider the very important question: Will adding the Internet to my course help my students learn?" As we learn how to better use web assignments, we hope more students will report that it helps their learning, but we should remember that it is not a tool that all students are amenable to using.

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Biography

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Team Teaching Psychology of the Internet

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Abstract

This article reviews the development and delivery of an interdisciplinary, team–taught course, Psychology of the Internet. The article highlights some of the barriers faced during the development and teaching of the course as well as the challenges unique to team–teaching. We will also discuss the structure of the course, including specific course activities. We conclude by offering an assessment of the course from the perspective of the students and professors.

Team Teaching Psychology of the Internet

The motivation to team teach an interdisciplinary course was based on the belief that students benefit from an interdisciplinary perspective. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that students benefit from viewing a topic from multiple perspectives because it encourages them to ask questions from different points of view (Orr 1996). Further, interdisciplinary learning will prepare students for the types of collaboration that they will engage in outside of academics (Gesiakowska and LoSardo 1991). We were similarly motivated by a desire to challenge ourselves and our own teaching perspectives. Evidence suggests that challenges in the classroom can lead to better teaching (Palmer, 1993).

On the basis of these motivations, we developed, designed, and taught a course titled Psychology of the Internet. The topic of psychology of the Internet is both timely and interesting. As people rely more and more on the Internet for various aspects of their daily lives (Stoll 1995), it seems important to explore the psychological aspects of behavior on the Internet. Further, the study of the Internet by both a computer scientist and a psychologist created an ideal environment for this particular content. Additionally, both professors have somewhat similar organization styles and philosophies toward student learning. Nonetheless, it was the first time either professor had taught in a team environment and several unanticipated challenges developed. This paper briefly describes the development and the delivery of the course. We then discuss some issues unique to team–teaching and conclude with both the students' and professors' evaluation of the course.

Initiation of the Course

The initial idea for the course began as an e–mail. To gain a better understanding of how our ideas about the course evolved, segments from an e–mail message describing our initial ideas for the course our shown below.

> (Initial 8/4/00) What do you think about you and I team teaching a course loosely titled Perspectives on Internet Behavior? I imagine it to be set up much like a graduate seminar, where we all read a few readings and have discussions. Assessment might take the form of thought papers and a project requiring students to analyze some sort of Internet behavior. Prep time should be really short. I thought about this as I read *The Culture of the Internet* and *The Psychology of the Internet,* both of which I intended to lend you when I was finished. I was thinking of going with a SAN/PSY 200 number, which has several advantages: 1. It would make it an interdisciplinary course, and 2. We can get a onetime course approval if we number it 200. I am thinking about this for the year you come back (2001–2002).

> (Response 8/4/00) I love the idea of team teaching a course on the Internet . . . however, my department would NEVER allow that kind of course to be a SAN course so it would have to be listed as a PSY course or some other alternative. I really like the idea . . . an honors course is another idea . . . I taught one of those once.

The authors discussed ideas for the course, began to identify books and topics, and started talking with the appropriate administrators about offering the course. A small ($3,000) internal grant was secured for the summer of 2001 which was used to help develop the course. Although it is beyond the scope of the paper to get into the details of the development of the course, it is worth noting that actually getting the course on the books required substantial effort from both authors. The computer science department's curriculum committee initially did not approve of the course. The course numberings for psychology courses were different than the course numberings for computer science courses. The administration of the campus was uncertain about how to count a team taught course into the respective faculty members' course loads. Administrative barriers such as those we encountered have been reported previously (Barkley, Clifton, deCourcy, and Kloos 1998).

Delivery of the Course

The course was offered during the fall of 2001. The final topics identified were based on our summary of the sources we reviewed and organized based on the textbook selected (Wallace 1999). They are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Course Topics

- Introduction to Computing
- Introduction to Psychology
- On–Line Persona and Deception
- Group Dynamics in Cyberspace
- Aggression on the Net
- Liking and Loving on the Net
- Internet Pornography
- Internet as a Time Sink
- Altruism on the Net
- Gender Issues
- Alternative Internet Perspectives

Graded components of the course included two exams, eight quizzes, discussion board entries, and a final project. The two exams consisted of a midterm and a final. A short quiz was given before the activity or discussion for each class session, thereby helping to insure that students reviewed the material prior to class. For almost every class session, students were required to post a discussion board entry (which was graded) that tied their classroom experience with their reading. Finally, each student individually researched and presented a topic related to the course. Actual class sessions followed several different formats, including lectures, hands–on computer activities, small group discussions, and large group discussions.

Lecture: Early in the class we devoted a few class sessions to lectures. We spent several sessions learning about the basic hardware and software structure of computers and the Internet. Likewise, we spent several class sessions discussing theories and findings in psychology that were most relevant to Psychology of the Internet issues.

Hands–on Computer Activity: The majority of class sessions included hands–on activities that were typically followed by a small group discussion. In a class session related to on–line personas and deception, for example, students were asked to participate in a newsgroup discussion prior to the class which focused on "getting to know Steve." Their only requirement was that they get to know the person they were communicating with electronically. Steve was asked to answer all questions honestly. During class time, students used the on–line chat facility to get to know "Dr. Fisher." Dr. Fisher (in real life a woman) was asked to say she was a male. After discussing their impressions of both people, we brought in both Steve and Dr. Fisher. The class was very surprised to learn Dr. Fisher was a woman and Steve was a quadriplegic. The exercise was a powerful illustration of the assumptions we make when forming on–line impressions. Many of our class sessions were organized in this manner.

Small Group Discussion: As illustrated above, most in–class activities were followed by discussions. Many of these discussions were done in small groups. Students were frequently divided into groups of three or four and asked to discuss the issue at hand. For example, in the illustration above involving Dr. Fisher and Steve, students first met in small groups and discussed their perceptions of Dr. Fisher and Steve. They discussed what they perceived their physical traits to be, their personalities, their likeability, their political orientation, and so forth. Small groups have the advantage of allowing virtually all students to participate (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1998).

Large Group Discussion: As the class continued we had more and more large group discussions; that is, the entire class discussed or debated an issue. Some of these discussions were quite structured. For example, during one large group discussion, students were asked to formally present to the class an article they had found about the Internet and psychology. The presentations were followed by a short discussion. Similarly, when discussing pornography on the Internet, students were assigned to either a pro–pornography or an antipornography group and were asked to research their position prior to class. The students subsequently had a formal debate during class time. Other discussions were less structured, such as when the class sat in a circle and discussed in seminar–format the topic at hand.

Team Teaching Barriers and Issues

Although we had planned and prepared extensively for the course, we did not anticipate several administrative issues. For example, approximately one week into the course, several students wanted to add the course. The psychology professor did not allow students to add the course. The computer science professor did want to add students to the course. Approximately one week into the semester there were three students wanting to add the course; they were standing in front of us, and we realized that this was an issue that we had not discussed. We were forced to make a quick and impromptu decision. The confusion was not just on the part of the professors. Students were not sure who to see when they had a grade dispute. Similarly, when students missed class they were uncertain who to call.

More challenging than the administrative issues were the issues related to effectively using two professors in the classroom. We began the course by dividing topics so that each of us had responsibility for about half of the topics. While we both attended each and every session, one of us was primarily responsible for the class that particular day. About five weeks into the course, we decided we were not effective as a team. The following segments of an e–mail illustrate the issue.

> (11/25/01) We have been teaching the course for five weeks now. I do not like the way it is going. First, it seems disorganized, as though we are flying by the seat of our pants. There are a lot of issues that we never thought about and consequently never discussed, so we have to make things up on the spot. . . . With regard to team teaching, this does not feel like team teaching to me. . . . During class time, one of us is in charge, the other helps to facilitate. On days when I am the teacher, I feel as though it is MY class and I have all the responsibility to conduct it. On days when the topic is not mine, I feel that I have the class off. I do not feel like we are a team or that students are benefiting from having two of us in the classroom.

At this point, we made major changes in the way we taught the class. We no longer divided class sessions. In fact, we did not even decide who would begin individual class sessions until moments before class started. Since we both are very organized and planned, this created a very uncomfortable state. We planned many more large–group discussions where we both led the discussion but where the agenda was not pre–planned. We became far less structured in our discussions and we made efforts to provide multiple perspectives on issues.

After this change (and it was more of a change in philosophy than form) the course began to take a different form. Students became far more engaged in the class and discussions included virtually everyone in the room. Students seemed to be part of a genuine community. They helped one another during class and organized out–of–class study sessions.

Although there were several unexpected challenges in team teaching the course, we agree that one of the best aspects of the course was that it provided students with an opportunity to see psychology of the Internet issues from two very different perspectives. At times during class discussions, we deliberately took different positions on a current topic. For example, during discussions on addiction on the Internet, one professor maintained that the Internet was taking from real experiences like touching, feeling, and playing ball with a child. The other professor maintained that even if this were the case, it was not problematic and those activities were replaced by other meaningful activities. Students were very engaged with this kind of debate and eagerly joined in the discussion. They enjoyed and learned from the two different positions each professor took.

We informed discussions through the knowledge of our disciplines. During one class session, we were investigating a Web site which was an on–line game. The on–line game was used to illustrate group dynamics. While the psychologist on the team explained the psychological implications of this on–line game, the computer scientist explained the algorithm behind the game. She discussed the software and the logic behind the software. Likewise, at one point we discussed Internet hacking. From the perspective of computer science, hacking can be seen as a way for the field to progress—new algorithms are created and holes in existing software applications are exposed, hence leading to improvement. From a psychological perspective, hacking can be viewed as a form of aggressive behavior which ought to be reduced or eliminated. Whenever possible, we brought our disciplines' specific contents to the students' attention. These activities were powerful illustrations of what we know is truly informed by how we know.

Assessment

The **Table 2.** below shows select items from final student evaluations. A total of 10 students completed the evaluation. Students were asked to

Table 2. Select items from final student evaluations.

Enhanced my understanding of psychology	5.2
Enhanced my understanding of computer science	4.3
Showed me how two different disciplines inform a topic	5.8
Having two instructors enhanced learning	6.7
Understand psychological implications of the Internet	6.6
Overall, this class went (0 = very poorly to 7 = very well)	6.3

provide ratings (0 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) for various aspects of the course.

On the basis of this quantitative data, it is evident that students believed that they benefited from having two professors from different disciplines teach the course. They reported that the course went well and that they learned from it. These quantitative data are consistent with student opinions expressed in a focus group conducted by one of our colleagues:

> 1) "You really have the opportunity to get the best of two different disciplines. It's very fun to see two instructors challenge one another and help spark further debate."
>
> 2) "Different perspectives make you look at a topic from different angles."
>
> 3) "I really think it benefits to have two instructors. You are able to see two different viewpoints from two different people."

Conclusion

Psychology of the Internet was an innovative team–taught course taught on a branch campus of Miami University. The topic was timely and one that students found interesting. The course was team–taught, leading to some very rewarding experiences for both students and the professors. The professors both reported that the course was an enriching experience. Although neither was especially fond of some of the administrative obstacles, both report that they genuinely learned from the experience. Finally, both professors believe that their motivations for teaching the course were fulfilled; students seemed to learn more deeply and benefit from being exposed to multiple perspectives, and the professors grew as teachers as a consequence of the collaborative environment.

On the basis of our experience teaching this cross–disciplinary course, we can offer the following as observations:

> 1. It is important to get administrative support for cross–disciplinary team teaching prior to a large investment of time in the course. Of particular importance is gaining a commitment from administrators that both instructors will

receive credit for the course. Cross–disciplinary team teaching, or any team teaching for that matter, is far more time–consuming than being the sole instructor.

2. As much as possible, the instructors should discuss the mundane aspects of and classroom management well in advance of teaching the course. To the extent that instructors can agree on administrative and policies issues prior to the start of class, the course will run more smoothly.

3. It is vitally important that both instructors be able to communicate effectively and often with one another. Both instructors for this course were, for the most part, able to be honest with each other about aspects of the course and its administration of which they disapproved. Communications of this sort go far toward making the course successful. Open communication between instructors and students can also be valuable for improving the course.

4. It is important to assess the course as the course progresses. As we discussed, this particular course changed dramatically in the way it was taught early in the term. This change was motivated by one of the instructor's reflecting on and being discontented with the classroom and its activities.

5. It is useful to be very deliberate in attempts to show how a discipline informs a particular topic. As instructors, we often fail to even recognize how often our discipline specific knowledge impacts the way we think. A team–taught course allows for us to be sensitive to such issues and bring them to the student's attention.

6. We found that it was very helpful to have a topic that was timely and interesting. Virtually all students have had some access and experience with the Internet. In this particular case, the topic itself helped create exciting and interesting dialogues.

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A Community Partnership Project: Rewriting Elementary School Career Education in Marion, Ohio

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Historically, partnerships among businesses, communities, and educational institutions have taken a number of forms. For instance, Junior Achievement has been a mainstay for upper elementary students for many years (Van Scotter, Van Dusen, and Worthen 33). Some programs focus specifically on aspects of career education. One example is the Feinstein Foundation's "I Can Make a Difference" Good Deed Program, which promotes career–related values through continuous interaction between individuals in the community and students in elementary classrooms (Brown 3). These and similar organizations strengthen communities through collaborations between business people and educators. This kind of collaborative effort exists in Marion, Ohio.

Marion Area Partners in Education (MAPE) is an organization that has been promoting educational opportunities in Marion and its surrounding communities since 1995. Formed by a consortium of local businesses, service agencies, and educational institutions, the organization's mission has included the support of lifelong learning initiatives, full service schools, and career development at all levels. To date, one of MAPE's primary accomplishments has been the establishment of partnerships between businesses and their local elementary schools. The goal of these partnerships is to provide hands–on career education to children in grades two through five by means of career guidance lessons implemented in the classroom by business volunteers.

Although MAPE's elementary school career education program was based on a prepackaged model, the MAPE board wanted to create its own curriculum, one that would be more appropriate for local children and more responsive to local needs. This paper will provide a rationale for including career topics in the elementary grades, outline the process of creating a viable new career guidance program for primary– and intermediate–level students, and describe the ways in which this program addresses the needs of all stakeholders.

Rationale for Career Guidance at the Elementary School Level

Career guidance, often referred to as "The World of Work" (Parker and Jarolimek 110) is part of economics education which falls under social studies. As such, it is already a legitimate part of the school curriculum. Experts maintain that children of every age, ability, and socioeconomic level can benefit from learning economic principles if teachers use "appropriate strategies and materials [and] … a variety of instructional methodologies" (Kourilsky 198). Thus, economics can be part of the content–rich curriculum recommended even for early childhood classrooms (Bredekamp and Copple 142).

Until recently, however, many workplace skills were imparted through daily life within the family and community (Abbott 6; Swick 37). Not so long ago, Americans could point to generations of children who had received their primary career guidance at the hands of their parents. Boys worked beside their fathers, planting barren fields in spring and harvesting the crops a few months later. Girls were instructed by their mothers in the domestic arts of hearth and home (Harkins, "Developmentally" 169). "Living, working, and learning [was] a single interconnected entity" (Abbott 6) that gave rise to certain expectations. Children believed they would follow in their parents' footsteps, and parents anticipated that same outcome. However, those expectations no longer hold true.

Change has come to the workplace. With family farms rapidly disappearing (Williams 6 D), boys whose career plans are modeled on parental experiences may look to manufacturing for long–term high–paying jobs. But these expectations are invalid. Mechanization has adversely impacted industrial employment (Gayle 12) to the extent that within a few years only an estimated twelve percent of America's workers will be employed on the factory floor (Rifkin 30).

At the same time, relationships between work and home life have been altered. According to 1999 U. S. Bureau of Labor statistics, 78% of mothers who have school–age children, and 64% of mothers who have preschoolers are employed outside the home (Smith and Colker 78). Rising divorce rates have left increasing numbers of children in homes with single parents, many of whom must balance both domestic and career demands. In many traditional families the need for two paychecks has forced both mothers and fathers to work outside the home. Parents who work long hours then try to manage household tasks at night do not always have time or energy to teach their children work skills.

Research suggests that children's career aspirations are related to the jobs held by adults they know well (Trice, Hughes, Odom, Woods, and McClessan 317). Though children know many adults who have jobs, in many cases they neither see nor understand what happens at work. The jobs children hear about may be too abstract or have titles that are unfamiliar (e.g., risk manager), or parents simply may not discuss their work at home. Children then turn to television for information. Unfortunately, the electronic baby sitter is often not a very good teacher. Networks in pursuit of high ratings portray unethical behavior as a fact of life in the workplace, and children remain confused (Harkins, "Developmentally" 169). If children are to receive consistent, reliable help in making career plans, it must come from the school. Career education must move outside the family circle to become part of the curriculum.

Some might suggest that career guidance is more appropriate for students in the upper grades. It is true that the topic has more immediacy for older students, but that does not preclude its introduction in the early grades. It is also true that primary graders should not make career decisions (Parker and Jarolimek 110). Nevertheless, constructing strong concepts occurs over time. By offering work–related experiences in the elementary grades, teachers provide a framework for more advanced learning and sound decision making in middle school and high school (Harkins, "Developmentally" 170; Harkins, "Using" 29; Secretary's Commission 19). This practice is consistent with the learner's need to experience concepts concretely before thinking about them in a more abstract or formal manner (Piaget, in Sternberg and Williams 50). Early career education also supports children's attainment of competency and industriousness, important developmental goals for learners in the elementary grades (Erickson, in Sternsberg and Williams 82). For all of these reasons, it makes sense to begin when children are young.

Foundations of MAPE's Career Education Program

In 1995, MAPE initiated a career education program with its local schools and business partners. The organization used a prepackaged curriculum which had been prepared by a professional organization and disseminated to communities across many states and several foreign countries. Of necessity, it had been designed for typical children living in generic neighborhoods. Though age appropriate for the target grade levels (one through six), the program was less sensitive to issues of culture and ability differences. This mismatch was an issue for some MAPE constituents who felt the program was too far removed from local children's experiences. Board members were also concerned about the high cost of materials and the lack of support offered by the distributor.

Although the overhaul of MAPE's elementary–school career guidance program began with the unanimous vote of its board members, that was only a first step in the process. The project was referred to the organization's professional development committee for further action. Serving on the committee were interested business people and representatives of service providers, as well as educators who worked at all levels—elementary and vocational schools, the local technical college, and The Ohio State University's regional campus at Marion. Of the committee members, an Ohio State faculty member who had been heavily involved with the existing career education program volunteered to begin planning the new program. Soon the committee asked her to write two new curriculum guides (one book for grades two and three, another for grades four and five). She agreed to do so and asked a colleague to assist her.

Now in its first year of implementation, MAPE's new career education plan rests on four pillars: 1) mandates from the professional development committee; 2) results from a survey that had been distributed to participants of the previous program; 3) academic standards at local, state, and national levels; and 4) findings from a variety of research sources. The new career education curriculum draws insight from and is supported by all four pillars.

1. Professional Development Committee: MAPE's professional development committee represented the entire community. As is true of any group enterprise, this project demanded a certain amount of consensus–building. During a series of meetings, the committee proposed some general characteristics they wanted to see in their new program.

First, they wanted the career guides to serve the children of Marion and its surrounding communities by providing sound information and worthwhile experiences that would expand children's knowledge of the world of work. Preferably, children would build on their own experiences by learning about community jobs as well as generic job categories. Second, to satisfy local teachers who held classroom time as a precious commodity, the committee wanted the program to be educationally worthwhile and up–to–date, assured by matching curriculum to academic standards and by offering a new lesson topic—technology. Finally, the committee wanted a flexible program that could meet the diverse time constraints of business partners who would teach the lessons in the schools. Ultimately, the members agreed on a format that allowed for choice in the number and order of the lessons.

2. Survey Results: In giving voice to the local educators and business partners who execute the career education lessons in the schools, MAPE initiated an evaluative survey which became the second foundational support of the new career guidance program. Surveys were distributed to more than one hundred individuals, including both business volunteer instructors and the classroom teachers who host them. The objective was twofold: first, to determine each respondent's length of service in career education and familiarity with the current prepackaged career education model; second, to identify enhancements that could make the program more effective. The instrument consisted of eleven questions. Its first section asked respondents to rate the quality, on a scale of percentages, of the curriculum materials currently in use. The second section requested free response descriptions of the strengths and weaknesses of that program.

Twenty volunteer instructors or coordinators (about 34%) returned their completed surveys, as did 15 cooperating teachers (about 37%). Almost 63% of respondents indicated that the major strength of the existing program was its content. However, both populations favored some changes, with many respondents (also about 63%) stating that materials were not adequate to meet their needs. Of primary concern were time allocations, either from a volunteer's work day or from a teacher's instructional time. Some teachers expressed misgivings about the ability of business volunteers to manage classrooms effectively, while others questioned the educational strength of program content. Volunteer instructors, many with little knowledge of appropriate activities for their assigned grade levels, were concerned about the availability of support materials. Despite the desire for change, respondents were nearly unanimous in the belief that early career guidance would allow children to make a positive impact on the workforce when they reach adulthood (Beard 2).

3. Academic Standards: Academic standards provided a third support for the new career guidance program. To ensure the educational worth of the curriculum, the authors turned to local, state, and national standards. Because the world of work resides in the study of society and its people (Parker and Jarolimek 110), social studies was the curriculum area most heavily researched. However, the standards that support many other content areas were also considered. The overall goals of each career education lesson tapped into the standards at one or more levels of at least one subject area.

As much as possible, the new career guidance curriculum called for application of the academic skills children were already learning in their regular classroom lessons: reading, writing, language, mathematics, science, the arts, and problem–solving, with some lessons touching on multiple content areas. This is consistent with developmentally appropriate practices recommended for the elementary grades (Harkins, "Developmentally" 172).

4. Research Findings: The final foundational support was research. A great deal has been written about the value of career education in the elementary grades and the best ways to implement such programs. Among the most important sources was a government document known as the *SCANS Report* (Secretary's Commission v), a 1991 report by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills which outlined some educational implications related to ongoing workplace changes. Chief among the recommendations was the need for students at all levels to exceed academic competency acquisition. In addition to the basic academic skills, workers of the future would also need to possess thinking skills like problem solving, decision making, and desirable personal qualities like honesty and responsibility (Secretary's Commission 16). Five work–based competencies were also cited as necessary: resource handling, interpersonal relations, acquisition and use of information, knowledge of systematic relationships, and technological expertise (Secretary's Commission 12).

Research shows that career education must go beyond providing job–related facts. It has been recommended that, besides offering useful information, career guidance must afford opportunities for increasing self–awareness, developing positive habits and attitudes, investigating equity issues, and building work–related competencies (Harkins, "Developmentally" 171; Jalongo 112; Secretary's Commission 16; Starr 19). An organized program integrating multiple curriculum areas has been suggested as preferable to occasional units spaced across the grades (Harkins, "Developmentally" 172; Parker and Jarolimek 110; Secretary's Commission 19; Starr 10). Educators and researchers also support using workplace visits and simulations to broaden children's concepts about the World of Work (Harkins, "Career" 222; Jalongo 112).

Meeting Stakeholders' Needs

Stakeholder concerns were of paramount importance in the creation of MAPE's new career education program. An early consideration was which lessons to include and how to sequence them. Committee requests and research recommendations led to the creation of ten lessons that fell under these four categories: 1) an Introductory Lesson: "Exploring the World of Work"; 2) four Core Lessons: "In the Workplace" (a work site visit), "Jobs that Match My Talents and Interests" (a self–awareness lesson), "Habits and Attitudes that Make Good Workers" (promoting positive personal qualities), and "Equal Opportunity" (exploration of equity issues); 3) four Workplace Competency Lessons: "Teamwork and Interdependence, Communication, Making Decisions," and "Technology"; and 4) a Final Lesson: "Review and Wrap–up" (included to consolidate knowledge and provide closure).

Several formats were designed to meet the flexibility required by diverse partnerships. A "Minimal Program" would include only the introductory Lesson 1, the work site visit Lesson 2, and the final Lesson 10. This format would be used by partnerships that were unable to implement a more complete program. More typically chosen would be the Basic Program, which consists of Lesson 1, the four Core Lessons in any order, and

Lesson 10. An Optimal Program is also offered for partnerships that want to do additional lessons. In this format, any or all Workplace Competency Lessons could be implemented after the Core Lessons, with Lesson 10 as the finale. The curriculum also includes suggestions for implementing the Workplace Competency topics as mini–lessons during the work site visit, a lesson which is included in all program formats. These alternative formats ease time constraints by allowing teachers and volunteer instructors to choose the number of lessons they are able to do.

The new program attempts to address other stakeholder needs in a variety of ways. First, each lesson offers three or more age–appropriate activities that vary in complexity so that volunteers can select those that best meet their comfort levels. This option is especially beneficial for new volunteer instructors. Experienced volunteers may also continue to do the tried–and–true activities they have done in the past, as long as they meet the program objectives. Notes to volunteers also help them tailor each lesson to children's developmental levels (e.g., the importance of using concrete objects with younger learners).

Because many volunteers have no knowledge of classroom organization, each curriculum guide opens with a list of general teaching tips on rudimentary classroom management. Among the suggestions are ideas on how to group children and help them take part in an orderly discussion. Each activity also includes additional suggestions that are specific to that lesson. These teaching tips are meant to minimize the disorder that sometimes followed volunteer visits.

Of primary concern is the need to assure students' learning. Although teachers know that much learning occurs when children express their ideas aloud, volunteer instructors tend to concentrate on activities rather than lesson objectives. To help the volunteers plan discussions that could meet the specified objectives, sequenced questions are included as part of the lesson text. For example, in a lesson on equal opportunity, the program offers a series of questions to guide discussion about graphing: "Who knows what the two colors stand for? Were there any items chosen only by boys? Only by girls?" Such in–text questions are meant to ease preparation time for busy volunteers while decreasing the need for teachers to reteach concepts that might otherwise receive insufficient coverage. Although the questions target objectives, volunteers are encouraged to keep discussion short and focused so that a significant amount of instructional time is devoted to the reinforcement of learning through hands–on activities.

Two other features also help volunteers promote children's learning. First, there are explicit connections among lessons included in the text. For example, as part of the discussion questions provided for Making Decisions, the reader will find specifically marked suggestions to aid children in seeing how decision–making skills support the acquisition of good habits and help individuals make sound career choices. Second, the text also helps children link new information to their own lives by including frequent references to local businesses. Encouraging children to build on their prior knowledge promotes stronger conceptual constructions.

Conclusion

The primary concern of the Marion Area Partners in Education in creating a new career education program was to better meet the needs of various stakeholders; committee members believe they have accomplished that mission. Because their new program was designed by community leaders, it is more likely to reflect local norms and goals. Because it is based on survey responses from experienced participants, it includes features that appeal to the business volunteers and educators who implement the lessons in the classroom. Because it employs research–based pedagogy that satisfies academic standards, it has educational value that justifies its inclusion in the school curriculum.

MAPE's new career guidance program is just that—new. The 2002–2003 school year has seen its first trial. Although MAPE board members have expressed initial satisfaction with the program, it cannot be judged successful until volunteer instructors have verified its ease of use and cooperating teachers have tested the appropriateness of its content. Most of all, its usefulness depends on whether it helps children learn about the world of work, and whether they enjoy the learning process. MAPE expects to collect responses from various stakeholders and adjust the program accordingly.

Ideally, a career education program should encompass "the total effort of public education and community to help all individuals become familiar with the values of a work–oriented society, to integrate those values into their lives in such a way that work becomes possible, meaningful and satisfying to each individual" (Galloway, in Jalongo 112). This principle guided the completion of this project. Insofar as the results satisfy this principle, MAPE's career education program will also meet the needs of the most important stakeholders of all: the children of Marion County.

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Biographies

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High Tech—Soft Touch: Bringing Communication to Technical Classes

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Abstract

Students in the information technology field are inundated with the need to learn a wide variety of technical skills in an ever–changing environment. While strong technical knowledge is critical to a successful information technology career, it is simply not enough. The ability to communicate technical information effectively often determines a person's professional success because even the greatest ideas will fail if no one understands them. Over the course of the last seven years, I have used several different techniques to incorporate communication assignments into my introduction to computer concepts and programming course with varied and sometimes unexpected results. I will present these efforts and my students' responses to specific assignments.

Background

When I began my professional career as a computer engineer, I never imagined that more than half of my time would be spent writing status reports and users' guides, teaching training courses, and making formal presentations to upper–level management. I had expected to devote nearly all of my time designing and implementing engineering projects and very little time on communication activities. My experience is not unique; the importance of communication skills in the workplace surprises many technical professionals (Reynolds, 1995; Sadler, 1995). When I began my teaching career, I decided that I would incorporate communication assignments to prepare my students for their professional careers. I expected my students to transfer their knowledge of writing and public speaking to my courses just as I expected them to also transfer their knowledge of mathematics to my courses. I soon discovered that many of my students had difficulty with technical communication assignments because they did not think that communication was an important topic in a technical course. With this realization, I began my journey on the soft side and, as Gruber et al. state, "at the very least, I wanted to introduce the idea that their writing careers did not end when they completed their English composition courses."

Progression of Assignments

My first approach was to create a very traditional academic writing assignment for which students chose a technical topic in computing and prepared a research paper complete with a bibliography and citations. My students understood that when they "write for a professor, they can assume that the professor knows more about their subject than they do, and that the professor expects them to show how much they know about the subject" (Samson, 1995). Although this assignment helped my students gain technical knowledge, I found it very difficult to evaluate their papers since they were full of incomplete sentences, grammatical mistakes, and incorrectly cited (or more commonly, not cited at all) references. In later semesters, I added examples of reference citations to the assignment, and I explained the most common grammatical errors. Although students' papers did have fewer errors, I was still dissatisfied with the assignment because both the students and I found the assignment to be tedious and unconnected to the other course material.

I then decided to add an opinion paper to my list of writing requirements, hoping to spark students' interest in the topic. I asked students to choose a topic related to the impact of technology on society and give a brief explanation of the topic as well as their opinion on their chosen issue. My intent was to have students write papers in which they passionately argued a point. Instead, I received opinion papers that were essentially research papers with a one–line opinion, such as "I think Internet banking is a good idea." The students had reverted to a style with which they were familiar: the traditional research paper paradigm. At first, I did not understand why my students had not written papers the way that I wanted. After discussing my dilemma with one of my colleagues, he asked me a simple question, "Did you tell them that's what you wanted?" I then realized that I had not clearly defined the requirements. I would never write vague instructions for a programming assignment. Why did I think that I should write my communication assignments differently? I modified the instructions so that the students had the clearly identifiable goal of trying to convince me that their opinion was correct by writing as if they were having an argument with me. By contextualizing the assignment, I noted that the quality of my students' papers increased dramatically. Not only did I receive papers that were passionate and interesting but also the sources that the students chose were more relevant, and there were fewer grammatical errors.

In my programming courses, I have included situated–learning exercises (Gruber et al., 1999; Artemeva, Logie, and St.–Martin, 1999; Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Pare, 1999) in the form of technical writing assignments that are more representative of the type of writing required in the workplace. Technical writing typically focuses on a very specific purpose for an audience that has less knowledge than the author (Samson, 1995; Pfeiffer, 2001). Although many of my students will take a technical writing course later in their academic careers, my goal is to integrate technical writing as a natural part of a programming course. I want them to understand, or at least begin to understand that technical writing is not simply an activity that they must perform in one specific course but is a skill that will be expected of them throughout their careers. In one assignment, I asked my students to prepare a status report on their current programming project for their immediate supervisor. In another assignment, students must create step–by–step directions of how to use a feature of the programming language or environment. In general, my students' initial efforts at technical writing were unsuccessful. Their status reports often contained unnecessary detail, and their step–by–step directions were very difficult to follow. I then realized that I had not written the instructions for the assignments for the correct audience. Most of my students had no prior experience writing status reports or creating step–by–step directions. I had written the instructions from my perspective and not from a student's perspective. I already knew how to develop these types of documents, but my students did not. Consequently, I now provide my students with a sample document. As a result, their technical writing skills have greatly improved. Additionally, in their final programming project, I ask my students to incorporate the new programming concept for which they have written the step–by–step directions. Not only have my students' communication skills improved, but they are also able to create more complex programming projects.

In their professional careers, many of my students will be asked to show the intended users how to use a program or a piece of equipment. In order to provide my students with an opportunity to practice their oral communication skills, I have also incorporated a brief presentation in which students demonstrate their final programming project to the class. At this point in the course, this presentation is a more realistic project because the student has transitioned into the expert, and the audience, including the professor, knows less about the project than the student. Students were very uncomfortable during this demonstration because they did not fully understand what was expected of them. I had written the assignment directions for someone who develops and presents demonstrations daily. In other words, I had written the directions for me and not for my students. I now provide a sample presentation so that my students have a better understanding of what is required.

At the beginning of my introduction to computer concepts and programming course, I now briefly introduce the concept of personality types based on the work by Myers–Briggs (Myers and McCaulley, 1989; Keirsey and Bates, 1984). All students then complete a questionnaire to determine their Myers–Briggs personality type. In the associated writing assignment, I ask them to comment on the accuracy of their personality description, describe potential benefits or challenges of working with my personality type, and tell me whether they think that knowing another person's personality type would be beneficial. Additionally, I ask them to describe their ideal university so that they can reflect on how their personality type affects their choices. The papers that I receive for this assignment are generally well–written and interesting with significantly fewer grammatical errors than traditional research papers. When I asked my students why the personality papers were better, they identified three main reasons: they were familiar and comfortable with the topic; they were interested in the topic; and they enjoyed the assignment.

Throughout the semester, we revisit the importance of personality types on group dynamics and also how personality types can affect the development of presentations, documents, and projects. I also use the information from my students' personality types to broaden my teaching techniques and customize my interaction with students. For instance, if a student is an extreme introvert, then I will use the more informal in–class exercise time to interact with that student individually to provide further instruction.

Outcome

As I refine my communication assignments, I continue to see an improvement in my students' writing and speaking skills. Since I have begun to give specific goals and examples, my students' papers and presentations contain fewer grammatical errors, are more focused on the relevant concepts, and are more interesting to read. The attitude of my students towards these communication activities has also improved. The moans, groans, and rolling of eyes that I received when I assigned research papers have been replaced with students thanking me for assigning the personality type paper.

One unexpected outcome of my efforts to improve my students' exposure to communication is that my own communication skills have improved. I am more aware of the intended audience when I create assignment instructions, presentations, and papers. When I can, I avoid writing in the formal, passive–voice style of traditional technical research papers that had become my habitual writing style. One of my colleagues in the communication department commented to me that she could tell when something is written in passive voice because she wants to fall asleep when she reads it. Consequently, I now use the first person, active voice whenever I can so that my audience has a reason to remain engaged.

Conclusion

I have shifted from merely incorporating communication assignments into the curriculum to interweaving communication throughout my courses. By doing so, communication has become a more natural part of the fabric of the course. Rather than relegating communication to its own isolated unit, I now try to foster communication during the entire semester. My students' communication efforts continue to improve as I create assignments that have more clearly defined requirements, are relevant to technical careers, and are targeted to my student audience.

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Biography

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Considering a Multi–level Approach for Assessment of Online Instruction

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Introduction

Although research in distance education recommends a multilevel approach for assessment of online instruction, standard practice at most post–secondary institutions involves only summative forms of evaluation. At the end of an academic term, students and educators participating in the distributed learning program are given survey questionnaires or are randomly selected to participate in focus groups to generate a qualitative analysis of the existing program. The information obtained from these reviews is then used to modify the courses for next term. While these practices provide useful information to those involved in the planning and design of distance education programming, they are limited in scope because they address the concerns of participants after the courses are over. Even if modifications are made to the courses based upon the perspectives of the participants, their initial concerns may not be the concerns of the next group involved in the program. As a result, the evaluation is merely an exercise in course revision. However, in order to improve the quality of online instruction, it is necessary to develop an approach that offers a multilevel assessment.

The Value of Evaluation

Evaluation of online instruction should be a continuous process. Educators must be willing to engage in the evaluation process throughout the course in order to obtain a thorough assessment. According to Richard Clark, during the process of the course "early evaluation makes it possible to determine which aspects of a distance learning program are positive and which are negative" (Clark 66). Clark suggests that an early concern for evaluation will allow instructors to modify their course to improve the quality of instruction before the course is over. By monitoring the learning that is taking place and whether the course objectives are being met, instructors can resolve issues immediately. Although some instructors do engage in this type of assessment, its practice is often inconsistent and in some cases not well organized. Some instructors gather this information but have difficulty integrating needed changes. As a result, most instructors simply wait until the end of the semester to modify the instruction for the next run of the course. This practice has little merit for the students who are currently enrolled in the course. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the students in the next session of the course will express the same concerns. Hence, modifications suggested during an early assessment and throughout the duration of the course need to be made as soon as possible.

Developing a Process of Evaluation

Perhaps the first step in conducting an assessment of online instruction involves really understanding all the objectives of the course or program. Educators should outline in detail course objectives and how each objective will be evaluated. Instructors may wish to consider the following equation to outline and draft a plan for assessment in their online course: "aims and objectives = content = teaching and learning activities = assessment" (Morgan and O'Reilly 47). Using this grid as a template, instructors can then examine and map out an assessment strategy for each specific objective of the course. Objectives do not only include student learning outcomes but also issues related to the delivery of the course, the media of the course, and the overall structure of the course. Instructors should also consider alternative modes of assessment in mapping their plans. Alternative approaches may need to be considered for differences in class size, course content, and time allotted for the completion of the course.

Once the course outline is complete, the instructors should then identify emerging patterns. For example, instructors may note that they rely on the same type of assessment practice for every objective of the course. Instructors should then see if they could incorporate an alternative method of evaluation to assess the given objective. Different forms of assessment should also be considered to accommodate different types of teaching and learning styles. Instructors should also determine whether the assessment tools being implemented are the most appropriate means of measuring and whether the objectives for the course are met.

Integrating Ongoing Assessment

Although there are a variety of methods to use to assess instruction in an online environment, Cucchiarelli et al. suggest that online instruction should involve all the following forms of assessment:

> 1. **Placement assessment** is aimed at determining both prerequisite skills and mastery of course content and objectives.
> 2. **Formative assessment** provides ongoing monitoring of student progress to ensure that learning is occurring.
> 3. **Diagnostic assessment** involves the identification of recurring learning difficulties unresolved by standard correction.
> 4. **Summative assessment** is the assessment that occurs at the end of the course.
> 5. **Self–assessment** engages both instructor and students to monitor the level of knowledge they have acquired during the process of the course (Cucchiarelli et al., 176–77).

It is recommended that instructors develop a practice to include each of these forms of assessment to gather a variety of information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the course. However, many instructors do not have the time to integrate a multifaceted approach of assessment in their course and are unwilling to add additional planning and curriculum development to the already heavy workload of managing an online course. In addition, dealing with large classes in an online environment may make it difficult to engage in some of the one–on–one type of assessment practices such as self–assessment. Other instructors do not know how they might integrate these types of assessments into the structure of their course or even which tools would best serve the purposes for the specific method of assessment. Finally, there may not be a consistent university policy regarding the practice of assessment for distributed learning courses.

Yet, regardless of the reasons, it is important to consider a multilevel assessment approach in online instruction to ensure that students are receiving an equitable learning experience in comparison to their peers who are enrolled in the traditional course. There are many more variables in the online environment that affect the quality of instruction perceived by the students. For example, many Web–based students often equate technical issues in a course with the success or failure of that course. If an assessment of this issue is done during the course, an instructor may be able to address the technical problem immediately and in turn, resolve the issue with an alternative method. This response to the problem is much more proactive than waiting until the review of the summative assessment at the end of the course. Students may be less critical of the failings of technology in an online environment if given the opportunity to discuss potential solutions to these problems while they are occurring.

Implementing A Multilevel Assessment

In order to implement a multilevel approach to assessment in an online environment, it is best to begin with developing an understanding of the types of assessment strategies an instructor can use. Most instructors are familiar with the variety of methods available to conduct assessment but do not know how to integrate these methods such that assessment occurs throughout the course in a structured manner. Many instructors may be concerned about too much assessment and may even consider a multilevel approach somewhat problematic because it does not fit within the process of a course. However, in an overview of each type of assessment, strategies and ideas are explained to better facilitate this process.

Placement Assessment

Instructors should never assume that students enrolled in distributed learning courses possess fluency in information technology or information literacy. Suzanne Stokes has found that "preparing students to take online interactive courses involves more than teaching technical skills. Abilities related to time management, self–discipline, independent learning, active information seeking, and constructing must exist" (164). Since many distance education programs do not offer a consistent orientation for students who plan to enroll in distributed learning courses, instructors should provide a preliminary packet of information to each of the students that details the requirements for the course. The packet should contain contact information, the course syllabus, descriptions of hardware and software requirements for the course, and a list of remote site and technical contacts for additional assistance.

Instructors may also want to give students enrolled in their course a pretest to determine the level of competency they possess as well as a preliminary orientation on equipment that will be used in the course. Students can be asked to draft a brief essay describing the qualities they believe students need to be successful in an online course, and the assignment can be used to open up discussion in the class. Other questions an instructor may pose can relate to the software and hardware that will be used during the course. Discussion topics can also highlight some of the objectives of the course.

At least one class lesson should introduce students to the technologies (both hardware and software) they will be using during the course. During this session, the instructor should explain the procedures regarding technical difficulties. Students need to know who to contact when the delivery of the course fails and how they can obtain course materials that cannot be downloaded or retrieved from the course Web site. Instructions regarding classroom policies, remote site procedures, and overall distributed learning program policies should also be addressed at this time.

Instructors who will be using specific software in their course should also identify if their students know how to use the application. It is often best to list this information in the course description or prerequisites for the course so students can know even before they decide to take the course what technology–related competencies are expected. In addition, some students may not have immediate access to the hardware or software that is required in the course. For example, students with a text only browser will not be able to retrieve graphic rich course content. Students with disabilities who are enrolled in the class may need alternative formats of the course material. Instructors need to be prepared to make the accommodations.

Instructors should also develop activities consistent with their students' online competencies and gradually introduce assignments that enable students to develop their skills in using new technologies. Some activities may include:

> 1) requiring students to send e–mail to one another and the instructor;
> 2) having students sign on to course–related listservs or send file attachments;
> 3) developing skill tests that require students to use various features of the courseware tools or applications needed in the course;
> 4) using electronic resources and materials for class assignments. The objective is to help students with limited experience in using such technologies find ways to increase their understanding of both the content and the technology.

It is important to take note of the students' level of ease in using the technologies to determine which students need additional support or guidance to master these competencies. Students who are having difficulties may be paired with online classmates who demonstrate an understanding of the task. By creating partnerships based upon the assessments, peers can assist one another in a more collaborative form of teaching and learning. Such structure adds to the interactivity of an online course.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment should be conducted during the development and delivery of the course. Barry Willis suggests that instructors should conduct formative evaluations that examine the outcomes of individual lessons. "These mini–evaluations might focus on course strengths and weaknesses, technical or delivery concerns, and content areas in need of further coverage" (par 5). Students can be asked to provide feedback on each instructional unit to determine if modifications are needed. For example, an instructor may wish to ask students whether they understood the objective of the assignment or if the timeliness of the instructor's response was appropriate for a particular assignment. Instructors can consult students as a group or individually. If, after a discussion, instructors plan to make amendments during the course, they should alert students in a formal manner. One suggestion is to include a section on the first page of the course entitled Important Updates to list changes or important announcements such as the rescheduling of assignment or project deadlines. By addressing epistemological issues during the actual delivery of the course, instructors may be able to address immediate problems more effectively. It makes perfect sense to offer students the opportunity to modify online instruction because it engages them in their learning much in the same way as a traditional setting when we offer students the opportunity to engage in a review of the material being presented.

In addition, the practice of engaging students in peer evaluations is also valuable in formative assessment. On group projects, students can be asked to assess one another, particularly in areas when they are required to collaborate. Instructors can then use this information to form new groups and to see which students may be having difficulty with a particular task. Also, when students are asked to assess one another, they may become much more involved in the assignment. Students may be inclined to participate more actively to ensure a positive assessment from their peers.

Diagnostic Assessment

In some instances, there are some students who may have difficulties adjusting to the online learning environment. Instructors may need to assess the students' skills in computer fluency or information literacy. Some students may be unable to complete certain class exercises because they lack the ability to locate information on the Internet for course assignments. There are many students who are unaware of the Web–based resources available to them through the campus library system. In most cases, few distance education programs include the library in the planning and development of a Web–based course. For this reason, it is important that instructors enlist the assistance of the library staff to provide an online bibliographic exercise that demonstrates to the students the Web–based library services available to them. Every online course should include links to the campus library. Instructors should find ways to show students how to locate electronic information for class assignments and introduce students to online scholarly journals, quality Web sites, and subject–specific Web resources related to the topics of discussion. The subject reference librarian can be invited as a guest to chat sessions to answer questions related to library research.

In addition to including library staff as guests in a Web–based course, the instructor should invite other individuals such as technical and academic support staff to assist the students with diagnostic assessments. If the institution has an online tutoring center for students or a technical support help desk, these links may be included as well. Many students are not aware of the campus Web–based services available to them. Including such links on the course Web site and then discussing their use is important because it provides students with a means of seeking additional information for questions related to instruction. These support services can assist in developing pretests and guides for evaluating competencies in students.

Instructors can also create their own diagnostic assessments using the testing tools available in courseware products. For example, courseware products such as *WebCT* and *Blackboard* enable instructors to restrict access to instructional modules until students have passed a post–test on the previous module. Instructors can also create skill sets of assessments to determine what type of information the students in the class have mastered. There are many software programs that enable instructors to create interactive Web–based tutorials that students can use to obtain additional review.

In addition, instructors should maintain a record of technical issues that occur throughout the semester. For example, instructors should record the number of times technical malfunctions impeded the delivery of the course. Students should inform the instructors of any difficulties with accessing or sending material, using the courseware tools, or other technical issues to determine what impact has been made on instruction. Instructors should always check if students can access the grade book, hyperlinks, and other files in the course. Such technical monitoring is important to evaluate the delivery of the course and update the technical staff of specific problems. Doing diagnostic assessments on technical issues is useful to the technical staff because they are able to identify more readily the causes of problems. All too often, technical support staff members are not informed about problems in a timely fashion. It is difficult to resolve a problem after the course is over. By working more closely with the technical support staff on tracking delivery errors and malfunctions, it may be easier to troubleshoot and prevent further instances of technical difficulties.

Summative Assessment

Although most instructors already engage in some form of summative evaluation, it is important to create two summative assessments for a course. Clark suggests that we need to separate delivery and instructional evaluation questions. In his view, media does not influence learning. Hence, when we do conduct an assessment of online instruction, it is important that students understand what it is they are asked to evaluate. Is it the manner in which the course was delivered? Or is it the quality of instruction they received? All too often students attribute problems with the media to poor instruction. Technical difficulties may contribute to problems in providing instruction but not the overall quality of the content of that instruction. Keeping a diagnostic assessment of technical problems helps create a related summative assessment for the students. Students could then respond to direct issues that actually occurred during the delivery of the course.

Focus groups, surveys, and other methods of assessment can be used to determine the overall success of a course, but instructors should also examine the factual materials available in relation to the course. How did the students score on specific assignments? How were the objectives of the course met? Were all of the objectives of the course met? What ways can orientation for the course be improved? Which support services were most beneficial to the students? These are just a few of the targeted questions instructors should ask students. Students can also be asked about specific assignments or activities. It is also important to ask students for suggestions to improve the design, development, and delivery of the course.

Self–Assessment

For various reasons, self–assessment is often overlooked in distance education. Instructors should keep a log of their e–mail interactions with their students and examine ways in which information could have been communicated better. What was the time ratio for feedback to student queries? How often did students ask questions about a specific assignment? What type of questions did students ask? Knowing this aspect will help an instructor clarify the objectives of the course. What technical difficulties prevented students from obtaining course information? How was class management? Instructors should invite other online instructors to participate in online peer assessment. All instructors should take time to determine if they have met their initial course objectives.

Students should also be encouraged to engage in self–assessment to be shared with the instructors. Willis suggests that students keep a journal of their ideas regarding the course content and technical difficulties they have experienced. This information enables instructors to determine what students have learned or what could have improved the instruction. Students should be given a post–test that addresses issues related to the course objectives. Asking students to respond to open–ended questions related to the objectives of the course in terms of their own self–assessment will provide useful information. Questions should be targeted to focus on specific class issues to direct the students to review elements of the course and not the personality of the instructor.

Instructors will know what students learned, what they understood, and what they did not. Students engaged in self–assessment recognize what areas for which they need to obtain additional skills if they continue to participate in distance education. Some students may realize that they may not be ready for the responsibilities of self–directed learning in an online environment. Instructors who review students' self–assessments gain valuable insights from the students' perspectives. This information will, in turn, help in modifying assignments or content in the course.

Online instructors should then conduct a meta–analysis of all the evaluation data for a final assessment of the course. There is always room for improvement in every form of instruction, and so instructors must be willing and prepared to make revisions of the course they have created. All course revisions should be documented for future reference to share with colleagues who may be considering developing Web–based courses. Major revisions in a course should always be tested prior to implementation of the course, particularly if these revisions require the use of new technologies. An instructor should evaluate the revision of a course with technical support staff to determine if the use of technology is appropriate to the instruction.

The Value of Multilevel Assessment

Many instructors may wonder why assessment of online courses should be a continuous, multilevel process. It is difficult to manage the workload of an online class, so why bother engaging in a process that will involve additional planning? Instructors interested in improving the overall quality of their online instruction must understand that various approaches of evaluation will generate a wide–range of information that can improve the overall design, development, and delivery of online instruction. Unlike a traditional classroom where instructors receive more visual cues in how a lesson or material is being received and understood by the students, the online environment is somewhat more challenging because unless students are encouraged to do so, their feedback about the success of a lesson is often difficult to attain. Some students do not even bother submitting summative assessments at the end of a Web–based course and many universities have not adequately developed a suitable assessment tool to evaluate online courses. In fact, most universities rely upon the same form of assessment used in the traditional classrooms. This practice is problematic because it does not address concerns and issues that occur primarily in an online environment. For this reason, alone, a multilevel approach for online assessment is much more critical for distance education instructors determined to improve the quality of their instruction.

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Biography

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Decompartmentalizing the Learning Experience: Crossing the Disciplines in Cultural Anthropology and English Composition and Literature

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The Concept for Crossing Disciplines

Cross–disciplinary learning offers opportunities for students to make connections between the disciplines and to understand the collaborative nature of education. However, the traditional practices of the educational system often limit such learning environments. As a result, students often compartmentalize new knowledge or insights, failing to grasp either the obvious or subtle connections among disciplines. Although most students by the time they graduate make some connections on their own among various disciplines, as educators we believe that we can offer students a richer learning experience at the beginning of their college studies through a cross–disciplinary setting. Because of the cross–disciplinary nature of the courses we designed, students will be able to make these important connections among other disciplines much earlier in their university studies, significantly enhancing the way they think, organize, and broaden their understanding. Rather than compartmentalizing learning, students will be equipped to make broader interdisciplinary connections and be much more likely to include this new learning model in their construction of a wider, more inclusionary world.

At Kent State University—Geauga, we designed our courses to offer a unique collaborative learning experience between two disciplines: cultural anthropology and English composition and literature. Our initial courses focused on two racial–ethnic groups, the Vietnamese and South Carolina Gullah cultures. Students who signed up for the introduction to cultural anthropology learned about these cultures from the perspective of that discipline, and students who signed up for English Composition

II (based on literature) read and wrote about these cultures. Students from both courses met regularly in one classroom and were thereby exposed to a cross–disciplinary approach in which theory and methodology from both disciplines intersected. The collaborative nature of these courses became especially valuable when students began writing the research paper, a requirement for both courses. We realize that for a variety of realistic reasons not all courses can be structured in a cross–disciplinary setting, but for those disciplines that do intersect, the experience enriches the students and is rewarding for the team teachers as well.

The Genesis of the Project

In the spring of 2002, the Office of Institutional Diversity at Kent State University challenged its faculty to explore new ways of introducing diversity into course work. The Office sponsored a grant program that asked its recipients to accept the "challenge of transforming [the] curriculum to prepare students for a world of transformation" (*Building a Diverse and Respectful Campus Community* 1). Specifically, the Diversity Advisory Committee directed us to 1) give insight into groups and dynamics previously excluded from the traditional corpus of learning and 2) examine pedagogical issues connected with the search for a more inclusive curriculum.

In addressing the first challenge, we selected Vietnamese and Gullah, two cultures that are often buried within other, more generalized focuses. Even today, almost thirty years after the Vietnam war, Americans know very little about Vietnamese culture and its people other than within the context of the Vietnam War. Similarly, little is known about Gullah culture outside the South Carolina Sea Islands, where it developed through the necessity of survival for enslaved West Africans and, because of its isolation, remained for many years untouched by outside influences.

The second challenge of the grant inspired us to do something different by circumventing the more traditional team teaching approach. The logistics of team teaching potentially complicate collaborative efforts, raising these questions: 1) Which discipline owns the course? 2) If two professors teach one course, how do they get paid? 3) How will students receive credit?

In addressing these concerns, we implemented the design of the project as team teaching two courses in which we would be able to cross disciplines and pave the way for students to be able to make intellectual connections between the disciplines. Because each course retains its identity, intersecting only at appropriate times, both remain within the purview of their home disciplines. This approach helped us avoid the "two professors but one course" salary and discipline dilemma. As well, students who enroll in either cultural anthropology or English composition receive credit for only the course in which they are enrolled. The benefit, however, is that students come to understand how disciplines often cross and complement each other.

Our primary goal was for students to be able to understand that disciplines do cross, that they cross often and naturally, and that cross–disciplinary teaching encourages cross–disciplinary learning. We specifically recalled our own learning experience during our student years, being shuttled from one course to the next, often wondering if or how they were supposed to connect. When does the light of recognition turn on in a student's mind that what she learned in biology might have something to do with the novel she has just read in a literature course? When does a student connect the threads between anthropological concepts with an oral history he has read in a history course? What if we could hasten and encourage these connections? Would students extrapolate from this experience by making connections among other disciplines? Would cross–disciplinary studies encourage critical thinking? We were certain that students would make connections in a positive, intellectual way that would foster independent and critical thinking. Learning models such as cross–disciplinary teaching invite students to make these connections early in their freshman year so that they can recognize the intellectual potential now when it can benefit them most.

The Logistics of Crossing Disciplines

Both cultural anthropology and English Composition II focused on two racial–ethnic groups, the Vietnamese and Gullah people of the South Carolina Sea Islands. Students in Introduction to Cultural Anthropology and in English Composition studied these unique cultures and shared the research writing project together, based on the theories and methodologies of both disciplines. However, students received credit only for the course in which they were enrolled. Students during the first semester of our offering attended classes in the same physical space, and only occasionally did we separate them when, for instance, one class had a test and the other had a writing assignment. All other times classes were held together, with students listening to lectures about cultural anthropological theories or attending workshops about effective writing. We included directions on how to write an APA formatted paper and how to write an MLA formatted paper. Students watched films, discussed oral histories and short stories, and learned how to blend approaches from both disciplines.

We were somewhat concerned about students' reactions to sitting in on two courses and receiving credit for only one. Some students in cultural anthropology believed—erroneously—that if it were not for the partnership with English, they would not be required to write a research paper. We were to learn at the end of the semester through student evaluations that although a minority voiced concerns or even objected to this arrangement, the majority of respondents reported that this method was advantageous to them, especially if they were to later sign up for the "other" course. However, the concerns of the few caught our attention, and the way in which we addressed these concerns are discussed later in this paper.

Providing Source Material at the Home Campus

When new areas of scholarship are introduced into a university curriculum, students need support material that is easily accessible to them. Although students are certainly encouraged to use the interlibrary loan system, we believe it is a positive sign of commitment to have materials readily available to students at the home campus. We set aside a substantial portion of the grant money to purchase important primary and secondary source material for our campus library. This immediate availability is especially important to nontraditional students who commute directly from work to the regional campus and are perhaps unable to get to the Kent Campus library in a more timely fashion. We firmly believe that when any course of study is offered to students, the local campus library should be involved. We found that many identified important books, unfortunately, are out of print. Nevertheless, we were able to circumvent this potential problem by ordering directly from book sellers who specialize in out–of–print books. The Geauga Campus library now holds a collection of books about the Vietnamese and Gullah cultures that rival other libraries in the university system.

Combining Theories and Methodologies for the Courses

Understanding Cultural Anthropology: With most of our supporting materials in place, we were ready to lay the groundwork for the two courses. This encompassed situating students in both courses to the basic theories and methodologies of cultural anthropology as well as in literature. Using Daniel Bates' and Elliot Franklin's text, *Cultural Anthropology*, all students were guided through the basics of cultural anthropology. Students learned first that culture is learned behavior and that it serves as a guide to understanding social behavior. From an anthropological perspective, students were encouraged to examine their own cultural conduct and ask: Why do we eat with a fork and a spoon and not chopsticks? How do we learn the appropriate behavior associated with men and women? Or, how do we learn our culture's recommended gender signals? What repulses Americans by the mere thought of having a drink mixed with the blood of a cobra (a popular drink for Vietnamese men who want to enhance their virility), or drinking the blood of a slaughtered goat (a West African religious ritual)? The answer comes in one word: culture, the social heritage of a group of people. It is, therefore, learned behavior. Anthropologist Ralph Linton writes in *The Study of Man* that a sea creature cannot be aware of the existence of water because it is surrounded by it. In the same way humans are only vaguely aware of culture, and it is usually made obvious when we compare the elements of our culture to another (7).

Students were introduced to the abstract components of culture, including folkways, culture shock, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism. Folkways are the customary and habitual ways by which members of a culture do things. For example, people tend to conform to standards of appearance by wearing similar clothing and hairstyles. But what about the occasional person who dares to be different, such as a Vietnamese woman who decides to wear only western clothing? If she is from a family who holds onto traditional customs, she can expect ostracism, negative comments, and maybe even rejection for breaking a social norm. All societies have folkways, and the content of that culture will form and direct relevant folkways.

By definition, culture shock is the whole set of feelings of alienation that one experiences in an unusual situation. The language may be completely foreign to our understanding. Ethnic foods may be unappetizing. If we are bewildered by the customs of another group, we may be inclined to judge them by our own standards and view them ethnocentrically. As Americans, we may find it strange that the Vietnamese have rooms in their homes that are set aside for their deceased ancestors, housing shrines to honor and immortalize them. Or, we may disagree with the unequal status of women in traditional Vietnamese society. The notion of the dowry, a financial compensation provided to the groom by the bride's family to make her more attractive and less of a liability, appears to be demeaning to Westerners.

Comparisons between cultures is a useful way of drawing attention to diversity. But to eliminate ethnocentrism, cultural relativism must be employed. This is the understanding that all cultures and practices within those cultures are intrinsically valuable and worthy of research. Outsiders do not have to approve of the religious customs of Hoodoo practiced by some of the Gullah. People outside the culture only need to understand that it originated from West Africa and that it works for its practitioners in satisfying ways that outsiders are really not required to understand. Cultural relativism requires humans to be objective and explain variation, not to judge it; approval is not required. Understanding is. Cultures should be examined on their own terms without biased opinions.

By learning how to recognize their reactions and attitudes toward the "other," students learned to respect the diversity and originality of Vietnamese and Gullah cultures without interjecting subjective western views. All cultures are different, and we learn the appropriate content of culture by virtue of being born into a particular society. Cultural anthropology provides us with the necessary tools to navigate through the endless variation and tremendous diversity of world cultures.

Students from both courses were next introduced to anthropological theory, which is based on scientific methods, empirical research, and provides the foundation for understanding cultural differences. Students learned that anthropologists use the same methodologies that the natural sciences use: hypothesizing, testing, and researching.

Empirical research was introduced to students through Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) which theorized the biological evolution and the relationship among all animal species. His research had an enormous impact on early cultural anthropologists who applied evolution to societies. Typical of the cultural evolutionists was Lewis Henry Morgan, whose *Ancient Society* (1877) classified societies into three different stages. He believed that technologically less advanced societies were simple and unsophisticated. Societies that had advanced technology and industry, such as western societies, were considered sophisticated. Morgan created a sequence of cultural evolution in which he believed that societies would pass unilinearly from barbaric, simple societies to advanced post–industrial cultures. However, because of their narrow vision, Morgan and the cultural evolutionists of their day lost sight of the wide range of cultural variation. We know today that because a society does not have advanced technology, that absence of development does not make them barbaric. Accepting standards such as Morgan's made it easier for 19th century western societies to gloss over very rich and ancient civilizations such as the Vietnamese and African cultures. Although cultural anthropologists today think in much more tolerant and inclusive terms, celebrating each culture's unique characteristics instead of judging difference from an ethnocentric point of view, it is nevertheless important to understand the evolution of anthropological thought. Knowing the history and development of cultural anthropology therefore helped students to understand their own initial ethnocentrism, where and how it originated (through how cultures legitimate themselves within the context of the wider world), and why biased concepts are unacceptable.

In an attempt to reach beyond ethnocentrism, another question raised by cultural evolutionists was why, if we are all members of the same species, do we exhibit such a range of cultural differences? Franz Boas recommended a new approach called historical particularism. One of the first anthropologists to develop the concept of cultural relativism, Boas believed that anthropological research should involve an intense examination of the culture being studied. Boas insisted that comparing preliterate civilizations to western society was of little, if any, value to the science of anthropology precisely because each is different and valuable in its own right. He further suggested that "individuals are products of their cultural systems and culture is the keystone to anthropology" (47). Boas was quick to recognize the uniqueness of Gullah culture by sending one of his Howard

University students, Zora Neale Hurston, to Eatonville, Florida, to conduct ethnographic studies about the all–black town. Later, Hurston would rely extensively on her collected material for her novels, resulting in her fame as an important African–American writer of the Harlem Renaissance. The connection between Boas, an anthropologist who introduced new theories about culture, and Zora Neale Hurston, an African–American writer who incorporated her teacher's theories into her literature, was not lost on our students. Her relationship to Boas demonstrated to our students the successful interrelationship of two disciplines.

Later twentieth century anthropologists are still focused on the wide range of cultural diversity. The cultural materialist approach takes into account the environment and adaptation to that environment. Anthropologist Marvin Harris describes food taboos and why the Hindu worship cattle and consider them sacred. He explains that "Indians have the sacred cow; we have the 'sacred' cat and the 'sacred dog'" (39). By extrapolation, 80 percent of Vietnamese are Buddhists and therefore vegetarians. The Vietnamese, who still rely heavily on the water buffalo for cultivating the rice fields, do not hold this animal on quite the same plane of the sacred as the cow in India. Nevertheless, the water buffalo remains an intricate part of Vietnamese culture and is highly revered.

Both Vietnamese and Gullah cultures are identified as rice cultures. Rice is so critical to their survival and such an intricate part of their lives that many of their cultural expressions revolve around rituals of planting and harvesting rice. Rice stories may also prescribe one's place and responsibility in society, such as the Vietnamese folktale in which a woman who, apparently caught dallying in her household chores, threw her broom at the giant rice grain who came to visit, rather than inviting it in. For punishment, the rice broke apart into thousands of grains, forever condemning rice growers to hardship when they harvest the grains. "Because of this misdeed, men must harvest with the sickle, and cultivate rice if they are to have any to eat; and the grain will be small because the woman hit it and it flew into smithereens" (qtd. in Durand 30–31).

Rice also symbolizes the relationship between people, the environment, and their gods. In another important Vietnamese folktale, "the square shaped paddies were an image of Earth and the blue sky an image of Heaven. Earth nourished the people. Heaven watched over them. These were the most precious gifts bequeathed them by their Goddess Mother and Dragon Father" (Hanh 53–54). When Harris points out that all humans create culture which they adapt to the environment, the Vietnamese folktale about rice becomes a focal point for that idea. He dismisses earlier beliefs that cultures are superior or inferior and instead focuses on the idea that diversity is essential and valuable, that "practices and beliefs can be rational or irrational, but a society that fails to adapt to its environment is doomed to extinction" (39).

Other more recent attempts to study culture can be examined from the idealist approach. People reared in a particular culture learn its appropriate rules. Americans do not eat dogs because their culture tells them that they are nonfood items: pets. However, the Vietnamese do eat dogs, and from their perspective they do not understand why Westerners do not use them as an important food source. Perhaps the practice began out of necessity, but it has become a part of their food culture. The same ideology about food occurs within all societies, and people learn to classify food from nonfood. Anthropologist Mary Douglas in *Natural Symbols* states that all humans organize the natural world into categories that they can explain and understand, and they thereby "create fixed taxa or boundaries, much as we distinguish colors such as red from orange" (53). Humans create boundaries and learn to understand the world from their own cultural perspective. It was our aim to invite our students to push against the boundaries of their own safe and familiar culture so that they could achieve an appreciation and understanding of cultures other than their own.

Understanding Cultural Studies for English Composition and Literature: American culture is experienced in literature in many ways, depending on the context from which the author writes, how the author chooses to represent his or her culture, and even the geographical place from which the story springs. Because of its heterogeneity, America is a wonderful place to explore concepts about and the evolution of American culture. To define what is American broadly, however, will always exclude another. During the great immigrant waves of the 19th and early 20th centuries, people were expected to drop their foreign–sounding names, forget their native languages, and to speak, act, and therefore become American, dissolving into the metaphorical melting pot. Despite the difficulty in defining what is American, we can be certain that many traits within the culture are held in common, such as a love of liberty and enjoying the freedom to speak, write, invent, and discover. Our spaces are vast, whether they are physical or metaphorical, and so even this idea of space influences our art as well as our philosophies.

While many aspects of being American do seem to have become blended, nevertheless, expressions unique to individual cultures that have enriched America have managed to flourish in places such as language and its highest artistic expression, literature. Instead of melting and forgetting their forebears, Americans are now proudly boasting of their hyphenated heritage. This pride is expressed in the literature, and today reading about Americans will include other cultures such as West African and Vietnamese cultures.

More recently, cultural critics have sounded the alarm that American culture has become too homogenized and bland. The modernization of American culture, it sometimes seems, has found uniform expression through a vast collection of shopping malls, small towns and large cities alike filled with McDonald's franchises, and myriad other franchised outlets. To shop in one mall in one city is to shop in every mall. But that is only one image of American popular culture sandwiched within a complex country that is also filled with immigrant groups who still hold onto their ethnic roots in a variety of wonderful ways, one of them being through the expression of language and its literary productions.

One such culture, the Gullah, traces its roots from West Africa to the South Carolina Sea Islands. Gullah, ostensibly West African, has been shaped by the Sea Island experience. It is a culture that contains unique identifying markers about being Gullah, including within the context of slavery but certainly not exclusive to it because the Gullah people have continued to evolve beyond the slave experience. Through its initial isolation on the Sea Islands during the era of slavery, Gullah culture has survived into the 21st century despite the influx of tourists and other outsiders who are attracted by the beauty of the islands. During the middle part of the 20th century, "snow birds" from the north discovered the beauty of the islands and its mild winter climate. They bought land and turned it into a golfer and retiree paradise which steadily threatens the Gullah people's ability to retain their land. Their way of life is undermined through cultural pollution and the forced dispersion of the Gullah people off the Sea Islands. Students are placed into an interesting position: to be able to read about a unique culture, one that bears studying and is worth celebrating; however, it is also a culture that is threatened by the outside world and is changing rapidly.

Gullah culture, however, is often submerged within the studies of a larger cultural context, homogenized into African–American culture studies. The study of African–American culture often subsumes the unique dynamics the Gullah people possess apart from other African–Americans: a highly developed creole language that is a mixture of West African languages and English; the blending of African religions with western religions (sometimes even a concerted effort by a minority of Gullah to preserve West African religions in its original form); art in the form of basket weaving, traced directly to Sierra Leone; and music.

Gullah culture evolved from necessity during the 18th and 19th century slave trade to ensure a people's survival, and it blossomed into a unique Sea Island culture. The realities of the steady encroachment of the outside world are poignantly depicted in literature and film. For our students in northeast Ohio who will most likely never visit the South Carolina Sea Islands, the film *Daughters of the Dust* is a good visual introduction to a culture and family in transition. Set in the 1920s, the film presents the Peazant family in turmoil as some choose to leave the islands to search for a better life, while others choose to stay behind. The film presents a near–mythical landscape that is isolated from the rest of the country (and whose characters speak entirely in Gullah). The elder Peazants were born into slavery, and the younger ones who have been born after slavery reject the past and want no reminders of it. The family prepares food that is African in origin (such as rice) to be eaten at a picnic in which all family members will come together for the last time. Each worships God in his or her own way: an elderly man in the Islamic tradition; the matriarch of the family in the Yoruba tradition; and the younger, forward looking woman, who is repulsed by her grandmother's old ways, in the Christian tradition. Students watched *Daughters of the Dust* before they read Gullah literature, thereby introducing them to the language and customs through a medium that offers a visual representation of the Sea Islands as well as the tempo of a lilting and pleasing language. Once they heard the language, they became better equipped to read the literature, connecting sound with meaning.

To get a clear picture of the Gullah culture and how it evolved, students also learned how the culture's West African origins have been definitively traced through the language in which linguist Lorenzo Turner identified over "four thousand West African words, besides many survivals in syntax, inflections, sounds and intonation" (296). Turner's linguistic studies debunked earlier ethnocentric or racist pronouncements that carelessly condemned the Gullah speakers as "slovenly and careless of speech [who] wrapped their clumsy tongues about it as well as they could, and enriched with certain expressive African words, it issued through their flat noses, and thick lips" (Jones–Jackson 135). Once students understood Gullah as a legitimate language in its own right, they developed a greater appreciation of the stories that use the grammar and phrasings in Gullah.

Gullah was once a secret language, spoken among slaves and to the exclusion of the white man. It later became a private language, spoken among people who held their identity in common. During the Civil War, when Laura Towne and Ellen Murray came to St. Helena Island in 1862 to found the Penn School to educate the freed slaves, they actively discouraged their students from speaking Gullah, condemning the language as "simple corruption of English" (Rose 96). While the Gullah language was once discouraged, today the sea islanders speak this rich and intricate language more openly and consider it a valuable heritage that connects them to their West African ancestral roots. This pride is also depicted in the documentary film *Family Across the Sea*, in which several members of the Gullah community returned to Sierra Leone in 1988 to visit their ancestral lands and discovered that they held their language and customs in common.

Our students also studied the Vietnamese culture, not in the context of the Vietnam War (ethnocentrism), but in the context of Vietnamese identity (cultural relativism). Instead of reading about the Vietnamese as the stereotyped enemy of the Vietnam War of the 1960s and 1970s, students got a sense of the Vietnamese people in their own environment as people who rear families, raise their crops, practice a rich spiritual life, and respect their elders. As with Gullah culture, we introduced our students to Vietnamese culture visually through film before we began reading the literature. One film that bears witness to the strong connection between family and land is through Le Ly Hayslip's story, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*. Understanding Vietnamese culture entails understanding their world–view which "constitut[es] an all–encompassing cosmological scheme based on yin and yang, conceived as two primordial forces from which everything else in the universe was created" (Jamieson 11). This model "suffuse[s] the entire world with a coherent system of meaning" (11) that once understood as a model for achieving a balance in all aspects of life—family, village life, and national identity—allows understanding the Vietnamese and their literature. Within this context, one of the best ways to study another culture is by reading the expression of that culture, literature, but to fully understand subtle signifiers that are embedded into the text, one must also create spaces to understand the culture.

The text material from Bates' and Daniels' *Cultural Anthropology* helped contextualize the literature. The students' literary studies began with a collection of short stories, *Behind the Red Mist*, written by Vietnamese authors who live in Vietnam in a homogeneous culture. These stories are about traditional life, the relationship between people and land, family and village. Other stories in the collection are written by Vietnamese of the diaspora who out of necessity have learned to adjust to cultures other than their own. Their stories mediate the struggle between the traditional world view of maintaining the life balance that their Confucian yin and yang principles require and the loneliness and feeling of alienation of living outside Vietnam. Students also read about the Gullah people in Patricia Jones–Jackson's *When Roots Die*, as well as in an oral history collection, *Voices of Carolina Slave Children*. Jones–Jackson's study of the precarious situation of sea island life and the tenacity of the Gullah people's resolve to hold onto their land is remarkable. The Vietnamese and Gullah people have managed to retain their cultural identity despite cultural pollution, whether the intrusion is local, in the case of the Gullah, or global, in the case of the Vietnamese.

Culture, then, is expressed through characteristics of a particular group. Culture embodies a group's tastes which include art, music, literature, language, religion, and philosophy. These tastes become expressions of a culture's world view and, in the case of the Gullah, through their unique language, which has wound its way into American English through the adoption of words and idioms, such as "goober" (peanut), "gumbo" (okra), "do de 'fect to you" (put a hex on you), "out de light" (night time,) and "dayclean" (daybreak) (Gareth n.p.). Other expressions of Gullah culture are found in basket weaving, songs, story telling, literature, and belief systems. Cultural expressions of the

Vietnamese people who live in Vietnam, as well as their influences upon the culture through the Vietnamese diaspora have also crossed into the American mainstream.

Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz borrows from Max Weber's idea that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" (5). Geertz explains that studying a culture always involves a "thick description" (14), which he likens to peeling the layers of an onion, and that "as interworked systems of constructable signs [. . .] culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be casually attributed; it is a *context* [emphasis added], something within which they can be intelligently—that is, thickly—described" (14). The concept of a thick description demonstrates why the definition of culture and reading about cultures (especially through literature) is always complicated and ever evolving and reshaping itself but remains always contextualized.

We also introduced students to the historian Gene Wise, whose method of historiography calls attention to what he terms "explanation forms." Wise cautions readers to be aware that texts "offer *explanation* of their structure and behavior—to show how they are put together, how they respond to stress, how and when they may change, how they respond to this situation and that [. . .] in American historical–cultural studies'" (xi). This method of inquiry is certainly applicable to the study of a culture's productions. Wise recommends three steps to careful analyses of history. First, one should read the text in question, employing a close literary analysis inside the text. Second, one should step outside the text and connect to the surrounding world and lives. Third, one should move back into the text to check how outside realities compare to or affect the constructed reality inside (114). Wise goes further, stating that "that book [. . .] is a form of human behavior, acts of a particular person [author] putting a particular construction on reality. The inquisitive reader is therefore asked to discover the human choices that led to this distinctive construction of reality" (364).

Culture critic Stephen Greenblatt suggests that readers ask a series of questions about any given text, questions we suggest our students should apply to their own reading:

- What kinds of behavior, what models of practice, does this work seem to enforce?

- Why might readers at a particular time and place find this work compelling?
- Are there differences between [the reader's] values and the values implicit in the work [that the reader is reading]?
- Upon what social understandings does the work depend?
- Whose freedom of thought or movement might be constrained implicitly by this work?
- What are the larger social structures with which these particular acts of praise or blame might be connected? (226)

Finally, Greenblatt states that "if any explorations of a particular culture will lead to a heightened understanding of a work of literature produced within that culture, so too a careful reading of a work of literature will lead to a heightened understanding of the culture within which it was produced" (227).

We challenged our students to learn about two cultures that to Americans seem at once strange and yet familiar. In the case of Vietnamese culture, most Americans have been exposed to it only through a recent war. However, reading Vietnamese literature presents a pathway to learn about a people whose culture is much older than ours, a culture that has much to teach us about Southeast Asia and its people. In the case of Gullah culture, we are certain that students found much that was already familiar, as many of their cultural expressions (such as the folk tales of Uncle Remus) have found their way into mainstream American culture. The Gullah people are fortunate in several ways but most fortunate because their initial isolation on the South Carolina Sea Islands has helped them preserve their culture. Although mainstream American culture encroaches steadily, the Gullah people are actively involved in preserving their culture. Our students were able to learn about a people whose culture comes from an African heritage that is much older than theirs, yet claims its unique space in American culture. Culture, then, gives people a sense of belonging; it marks them as "Vietnamese," or "Gullah," or even "Vietnamese–American," or "African–American."

Developing Teaching Strategies With Literature

Culture critic Edward Hall, who agrees with Geertz about the importance of context, states that in interpreting meaning in language, "the problem lies not in the linguistic code but in the context, which carries varying proportions of the meaning. Without context, the code is incomplete since it encompasses only part of the message" (86). As our students studied the theories and methodologies of cultural anthropology and cultural studies that we have discussed in this paper, they became much more comfortable, i.e., contextualized, with reading the literature and more confident about their analysis of the literature because we provided them with the tools to do so.

We divided readers into groups of three to four students and asked them to analyze the assigned stories, using the concepts of cultural anthropology and culture studies. Each group was given a series of prompts to direct them. At least two or three groups were assigned the same story but were given different prompts. This way students were able to discern how one story could be analyzed from several perspectives. After they had time to discuss the story among themselves and formulate their responses, we then opened the discussion to the entire class.

In the collection of Vietnamese stories, *Behind the Red Mist*, the short story "A Sigh Through the Laburnums" addresses the practice of infanticide. As readers from a western culture who abhor the idea that the female child is worthless and a burden to her mother, we asked our students to explore their reactions to the story by recognizing their own culture shock and ethnocentric responses. Once these reactions were recognized, we then asked them to apply the concepts of cultural relativism to the story and, in the case of female infanticide, if cultural relativism applied. Using the same story, we asked another group of students to think about Edward Hall's statement that "ultimately, what makes sense (or not) is irrevocably culturally determined and depends heavily on the context in which the evaluation is made" (214). We then asked students to apply that idea to the story.

In *Voices of Carolina Slave Children*, we asked one group to address the fact that these oral histories come from the WPA project of the 1930s, decades after the institution of slavery, the main subject of the stories. Historian Gene Wise indicates that "history [is] constructed. If we can see such work as people's *reconstruction* of their past, not the past *recaptured*, then we can admit that a book [oral history] happens in the mind as well as in libraries" (78). We asked our students to question how the memory of slavery might change, that is, to be a reconstruction versus a recapturing of those memories. Another prompt asked the group to consider that "an important part of understanding a different culture is learning how things are organized and how one goes about learning them in *that* culture. That is not possible if one persists in using the learning models handed down in one's own culture" (Hall 123). We asked students what steps they would take as an outsider of Gullah culture to ensure an understanding beyond a superficial response. We asked them to think about barriers and to consider what strategies they might use to surmount them.

The responses to these prompts in group discussion were thoughtful and substantive, and students felt more confident with their responses precisely because we gave them the tools to deconstruct the literature in meaningful ways. In fact, approximately the first half of the course was spent familiarizing students with the foundational material that prepared them for reading the literature during the latter part of the course. Materials included formal presentations and lectures about culture theory and methodologies, films depicting the culture students were studying, and open discussion among students and professors. Once the foundation was laid, students then read the literature.

Students began their semester–long assignment, the collaborative writing project, early in the course. Although it was not a requirement, we strongly encouraged students to select someone from the partner class and to identify early in the semester which culture they were most interested in. By beginning early, they were able to read widely and constantly inform their work with material as their learning curve ascended. Aside from the primary and secondary library sources, lectures and presentations were readily available on the course Web site for students to download study material, directions for writing the research paper, course syllabi, and scheduling changes. Students quickly became comfortable with both of us, and they invariably approached either of us for advice or to schedule a conference

Identifying the Benefits of Cross–Disciplinary Learning

Designing these cross–disciplinary courses has had some surprising results. We were confident from the inception of the idea that teaching these courses would be a challenge, but we both admit that we had no idea the project would be so much fun—and such hard work. The time that we have invested in designing the course so that our students could understand the cross–disciplinary nature of the subjects was enormous. One of us had not team taught before, and the other had a brief, awkward experience at another institution. We simply did not know what to expect, and we understood that team teaching could not be for everyone. We were not even sure if team teaching was meant for us or whether we were a good mix. Yet, the idea of collaborating and practicing cooperation in front of our students, who would in turn use us for role models when it came time to collaborate with their own partners, appealed to us. One happy aspect we discovered about each other is that we both very much enjoyed learning new ideas from the other's area of expertise, reading new books, and experimenting with new ideas. This openness to new learning models may be taken for granted among university professors, but we all know colleagues who are in various stages of burnout. Collaborating has given us renewed energy in the classroom and a new vision about what teaching and scholarship can become when it is shared.

Listening to Feedback in the Student Survey

At the end of our first semester, we administered a qualitative assessment survey which asked students to assess the collaborative, cross–disciplinary nature of the courses and to reflect on their learning experience. Out of seventeen respondents, all but three students reported that the experience was positive; all agreed that they would recommend the courses to others. One student reported about the collaborative writing project—sometimes not a popular idea among students—that "even though there are drawbacks, a partner brings new ideas and may clarify your writing." Another reported finding "significance in learning different cultures and not looking at these cultures ethnocentrically." Another student indicated enjoyment in "reading from the actual cultures, instead of just reading an anthropologist's view of the culture." Another reported benefiting "from group work in the form of discussing books and bringing ideas together." Another said that "the English course allowed me to use what I already know to learn anthropology easier." And another said, "It has been a while since I have taken an English class, so it was a pleasure to have a little refreshment about grammar." One student expressed misgivings about having to write a research paper in an introductory class (cultural anthropology). Another student felt deserving of credit for both classes. These issues were legitimate concerns that we knew needed to be addressed before the next semester.

Were we, in fact, good role models for the collaborative learning method? "We learned from both instructors. Both are culturally learned," wrote a student. Another observed that "Renate had actually been to Vietnam, which makes her instructor content valid. Molly also has traveled extensively to many countries, which makes her lessons very interesting and informative." Another reported, "I liked the team–teaching because I could go to both teachers for advice on the research paper." Finally, a student summed up the course this way: "The stories people tell can say a lot about their culture and be more interesting than straight textbook reading."

We asked one final question of our students: "Would you like to see other courses taught in the cross–disciplinary way?" We had some interesting suggestions:

- English and history
- History and foreign language of one country
- The sciences
- Native American studies and history
- Two separate cultures affected by war
- Civil War customs and literature
- Math and geology

The primary goal that we wrote into our grant proposal was that we wanted our students to see connections between disciplines, for them to be able to decompartmentalize the learning experience and learn to think connectively. We believe their response to this last question demonstrates that this goal has been met.

Acting on the Instructor Self–Assessment

Acknowledging Student Concerns: Teaching the literature and culture of two groups affected both the introduction to cultural anthropology and English composition courses in many ways. Some students were not sure which culture to research until they had been exposed to both. This hesitancy resulted in a time constraint for students who were unsure as to which culture to research. Other students picked their culture quickly. We also felt that just as we were getting into one culture, moving beyond introductory material to the more detailed, substantive material, we had to stop and move to the other. There is so much material to cover, so many ways to present such a wide variety of material in the form of lectures, presentations, films, and literature that we found ourselves adjusting the schedule several times to accommodate additional materials we wished to include. We concluded that we need to offer one culture for each set of courses. We therefore arranged our course offerings for the following semester in the form of two sections, one for each culture.

We were also concerned that one student misunderstood the research paper requirement and that two others expressed concerns about sitting in one class for two courses yet only receiving credit for the course for which he or she selected. Although these students were in the minority, these are valid concerns that we needed to address quickly and conclusively before the next semester. One student in particular felt sure that if the classes had not been taught in the cross–disciplinary manner, he or she would not be required to write a research paper, what he or she felt to be an English requirement.

Applying Experience to the Next Course: At the beginning of the new semester, we made sure that students understood that the research paper requirement is normally applicable for both courses, whether the courses are taught together or separately. We explained the writing requirements in the previous semester's syllabi, announced the requirement at the beginning of the course, and redoubled our efforts to be clear about this requirement.

Ironically, an unexpected mix-up occurred with scheduling for the following semester that we have decided to use to our advantage. One set of courses is scheduled at the same time (the way we requested), but the other set is scheduled at a different time during the same day. We felt that the inadvertent physical separation of one of the courses has become an opportunity to further test the optimum way to teach these courses in the cross–disciplinary fashion. We are keeping the time–compatible classes physically together the way we did the previous semester. The other classes are taught separately, and we visit each other's classes as guest lecturer when the material necessarily crosses the disciplines. Students in these separate classes are aware of the partner class, and we are encouraging mixing study partners. However, we wonder if, because these students do not meet together at all, they may be reticent about working with a study partner from the other course.

We hope to counteract the unexpected separation of the classes through the Web site that links the two courses. Students from both sets of courses access their Web sites often. We have added a chat option and periodically announce times the chat room is open for real–time discussion, encouraging cross–disciplinary learning that way.

Changing Texts: Other changes we have made are textual in nature. The text for the cultural anthropology course has been changed to Barbara Miller's *Cultural Anthropology*, and students are reading additional literature, such as Charles Colcock's *Gullah Folktales of the Georgia Coast* and Charles Chestnutt's *Conjure Tales and Stories of the Color Line*. Both these books are written in the Gullah language, which is initially somewhat difficult to read, but we hope that the extra time that will be required to read and discuss these stories will give students a chance to digest this new material at a more thoughtful pace. Because students are now introduced to the Gullah language in their readings, we are keeping the film *Daughters of the Dust* for language orientation. We opted to keep *Voices of Carolina Slave Children* this semester, but we have identified the text as somewhat problematic because we wonder about the compiler's motive for selecting an unusual spate of happy perspectives.

In the Vietnamese section of the courses, we have added Gary and Monique Lockhart's translation of social realism, *The Light of the Capital*. Its three stories of 1930s Vietnam bear witness to the cruelties of French colonialism upon the peasant population. Students seemed to really enjoy social realism of the 1930s, so we are currently attempting to locate other literature of the same period. We have also added Nguyen Kien's *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood*, an autobiography of an Amerasian. We have completed the reading list with Andrew Pham's *Catfish and Mandala*, in which a Vietnamese–American returns to his native Vietnam to offer his view as a "Viet Kieu" (Foreign Vietnamese).

Conclusion

Students are resilient and open to new ways of thinking. Our courses are much talked about on our campus; some students have even signed up for the course which teaches the culture they are most interested in, a choice they did not have the previous semester. We hope that the concept will catch on, if not in the formal way we have done it, then at least in smaller yet significant ways that promise students the opportunity for cross–disciplinary critical thinking.

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Portfolio Assessments: A One–Way Ticket to Better Evaluations

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Abstract

Using a portfolio as a course assessment tool yields a twofold benefit. First, it can enhance the active learning components within the course. A portfolio encourages active student involvement, offers a mixture of opportunities for student success, and promotes critical thinking, creativity, and development of informed judgment. Second, it improves student scoring on course evaluations. Comparative results provide demonstrable evidence that student–driven evaluations are higher using the portfolio approach than not. Opportunities abound to employ portfolio assessment across disciplines.

Introduction

Evaluation of teaching effectiveness is an integral part of the review process for faculty at universities and colleges. Salary, reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions are contingent upon the outcomes of the evaluation process. Performance indicators used to document teaching effectiveness include peer, self– and student evaluations. Peers are apt to be kind in their evaluations. An upward bias tends to prevail in self–evaluations. But students, the primary benefactors of our instructional efforts, are in a position to candidly assess the successes and shortcomings of our classroom performance. As such, it behooves a faculty member to develop a product that balances professional integrity with an eye toward student success.

Evidence gathered by educational psychologists and instructional specialists contends that students have a higher commitment to learning when actively engaged and that active learning promotes positive student attitudes. Using a portfolio as a basis for assessment is one vehicle to promote active learning. It can be designed to employ a variety of assessment techniques offering a mix of opportunities for student success. Progressive writing assignments make students shoulder more of the burden for their education. Assessment moves up Bloom's Taxonomy by embedding opportunities for critical thinking, creativity, and developing informed judgment on contemporary social issues.

Active learning benefits not only the student but also the instructor. When students feel more successful in a course, this sense of success translates into higher scores on evaluation instruments. Comparative results provide demonstrable evidence that student–driven evaluations are higher using the portfolio approach than not.

Example of a Portfolio

One example of a portfolio that is used in an introductory economics course is composed of five basic elements created by students over the course of the semester: 1) a reaction paper, 2) position papers, 3) a haiku, 4) an economic journal, 5) a reflective essay.

1. Reaction Paper: The reaction paper is the first element of the collection. The goal is to facilitate learning both the introductory concepts and the rhetoric of economics and to encourage students to connect economics to a real world personal experience. The paper is meant to be open–ended, and informal, yet, creative. Topics or principles drawn from the first section of course content are eligible for use in the reaction paper.

2. Position Papers: Position papers provide structured learning opportunities for students to apply the power of economics to understand and to solve contemporary socioeconomic problems. In fact, the position paper is the goal of the class and serves as a substitute for a formal exam over eighty percent of the covered material. Position papers provide an opportunity to assess student learning at cognitive levels higher in Bloom's Taxonomy (Knowledge → Comprehension → Application → Analysis → Synthesis → Evaluation) than mere knowledge and comprehension.

3. Haiku: The haiku is a lesson in brevity. Written after the final position paper is completed, the purpose of the haiku is to encourage creative expression in the affective realm of learning.

4. Economic Journal: The journal promotes economic literacy by requiring students to tune into current news events and media presentations outside the classroom. Economic concepts and principles taught during the final section of course material are fair game for journal entries.

5. Reflective Essay: The reflective essay is the final feature of the portfolio. This is the instructor's figurative apple. The essay's objective is to encourage students to reflect on their experience. Students are asked to consider how their personal thinking about economics, their opinions and values on contemporary economic issues, and their reading, writing, and research skills have been affected by the introductory course.

6. Portfolio Collection: Putting It All Together: The finished product is bound in a three ring binder or other bound format. The components include: 1) a cover page, 2) a table of contents, 3) a reflective essay, 4) a reaction paper, 5) a haiku, 6) a revised position papers, and 7) an economic journal.

Methodology

As a first experience course, an introduction to economics uses the power of the discipline to explain the nature of, cause of, and solution to contemporary issues facing American society. Students are exposed to basic terminology and concepts crossing both microeconomics and macroeconomics. The course pedagogy is a mix of lecture and group discussion.

Students are encouraged to begin thinking early in terms of where, when, and how they have encountered economics in real life. These experiences become the substance for the reaction paper. Any introductory concept from the role of choice and opportunity cost to the mechanics of the model of supply and demand are eligible topics. Students take ownership of the vocabulary at this stage. Elzinga (2001) asserts that giving students this ownership inspires a lasting appreciation of the subject because the terminology serves as a memory peg. The due date for the reaction paper coincides with the first examination. If a reaction paper misses the mark, the student is encouraged to rewrite and resubmit.

Approximately eighty percent of the introductory course is spent examining contemporary socioeconomic issues, including an analysis of the priorities established in the federal budget, the magnitude of the national debt, the solvency of the Social Security program, implications for the U. S. income distribution, and the economics of crime, pollution, and discrimination. Four position papers are written which serve as substitutes for taking a formal exam.

The lecture mixed with discussion introduces each new socioeconomic issue. A consistent presentation format is employed to help students logically organize information. Interest in an issue is, first, peaked by soliciting student perceptions and establishing common ground for future discussion. Next, a review of current and historical statistical evidence gleaned from authoritative sources is presented. The purpose is to highlight the height, width, depth, and breadth of the issue. Functional literacy in the use and interpretation of statistical data is encouraged. Occasionally, students are asked to track down information on the Web. During these Web assignments, students hone Internet surfing and computer literacy skills initially by locating pre–specified URLs and downloading and printing requested information. In time students engage in independent searches. An analysis of the role of economics and an introduction to relevant terms and principles follow. Finally, students offer possible solutions and discuss potential positive and negative implications. Throughout this stage, note taking is required and rewarded. Carrier (1983) concludes that note taking is a legitimate component of the educational experience. Additionally, Becker (1979: 1362) suggests that "[p]eriodically collecting and reviewing students' classroom notebooks is an assessment device that encourages students to take the classroom activity seriously and provides information on what students are attending to in class." Note taking activities develop the ability to distill the essential ideas from minor points.

The concluding activity is the preparation of a position paper. Students respond to a well–structured question on the issue. Critical thinking skills are fostered as a student progresses from paper one through paper four. In general, each paper requires a restatement of the socioeconomic problem; a presentation of empirical evidence either affirming or refuting the issue at hand; a clarification of definitions, if any; an explanation of the role of economics; and, finally, an evaluation of proposed public policy choices.

Students submit their papers twice. The first submission results in a grade. Students turn in not only their response to the question but also all notes taken plus any Web assignments. The second submission of only the revised response occurs two class days later electronically. The class papers are converted to one composite PDF file and posted to the Internet, thereby expanding the audience well beyond the classroom.

The haiku, a seventeen syllable Japanese poem, is a lesson in brevity and a creative expression of affective learning. The haiku is prepared within a week of completing the fourth position paper. Students are encouraged to draw on one of the socioeconomic issues in writing the haiku.

The last segment of the course provides insight on the operation of the macro economy. Students are encouraged to tune in to the world beyond their front door. News events, media presentations, and personal discussions related to the macro economy are used to prepare dated entries for the economic journal.

The reflective essay, the final element of the portfolio collection, is collected on the day of the final examination. This essay provides an opportunity for students to reflect and assess a semester's efforts. The instructor has an opportunity to evaluate student growth beyond their grades. Several prompting questions are suggested:

- How has my thinking changed about economics in general, in the level of appreciation for the subject matter, and in the creative thinking and problem solving capacities?
- How does the subject matter of this course relate to my overall learning, my ability to read and analyze news events, my ability to see the whole picture as well as the parts, my future course work or life?
- How has the cou rse material or course activities changed the way that I think, my opinions or values concerning contemporary social issues, and my tolerance of opinions or perspectives different from my own?
- How have my reading, writing, and research skills been affected as a result of my work in this course?

Comparison of the Spring and Fall 2001 Courses

The same instructor taught introduction to economics during both the spring and fall semester of 2001. The fundamental aspects of the course remained consistent. Both standardized course goals and learning outcomes were unchanged. *Economics of Social Issues* and a companion reader, *The Economics of Public Issues*, continued to be used following an unchanged course outline. Assessment continued to be geared toward meeting the 39 pre–identified student–learning objectives. Students wrote a total of four position papers in both the spring and fall semesters. Course evaluations were conducted using the university's instrument as well as a more detailed instructor instrument.

Two key differences between the courses involved the added burden placed on students in the fall class and the increased variety of opportunities for students to experience success. The portfolio approach to assessment required each student to prepare a reaction paper, haiku, an economics journal, and a reflection paper in addition to writing the two formal exams and four position papers. The posting of position papers to the Internet increased the viewing audience during the fall semester. At the conclusion of the fall course, each student possessed a polished and bound collection of work as evidence of a semester's efforts.

Evaluations

Formal student evaluation of teaching effectiveness at the university is handled using an 8–statement (Woods) instrument with rankings that range from 7—excellent to 1—very poor. A second instructor developed instrument (Non–Woods') poses 48 evaluative statements with rankings running from a high of 5 to a low of 1. Comparative results provide demonstrable evidence that student–driven evaluations are higher using the portfolio approach to assessment in the introduction to economics course than not. **Table 1** (p. 126) reports the results from the university evaluation form. The eight criteria are identified in the first column. Respective scores from the two semesters are recorded in columns two and three. The percentage improvement in scores using the portfolio pedagogy is reflected in the last column. Student Accomplishment, that is, the degree to which the economics class helped the student increase in knowledge, skills, and competencies in comparison with other classes taken by the student improved by 35.4%. The Total Experience score (including teaching, content, readings, tests, outside activities, and homework) increased 33.6% over the spring semester.

The instructor–developed instrument echoes similar positive results. Most striking, though, is the percentage gain in student self–evaluation, 31.8%, in **Table 2** (p. 126). This is the first time that the score for student self–evaluation exceeded that of the instructor evaluation. One advantage of the instructor–developed instrument is its attention to detail.

The first twenty statements relate to instructor performance; the eighteen following statements focus on the course, and the remaining statements are directed at student self–evaluation[1]. Notable among the course evaluation

Table 1: Woods' Form

Econ 200	Spring 01	Fall 01	
Sample Size	#18	#23	% Change
Scholarship	5.28	6.4	0.229
Organization/Clarity	4.89	6.4	0.285
Interaction w/ Group	4.94	6.3	0.267
Interaction w/ Individuals	4.72	6.2	0.312
Enthusiasm	5.39	6.4	0.227
The Instructor	4.89	6.5	0.281
Total Experience	4.67	6.2	0.336
Student Accomplishment	4.56	6.2	0.354
Average	4.92	6.3	0.28

Table 2: Non–Woods' Form

Econ 200	Spring 01	Fall 01	
Sample Size	#19	#22	% Change
Instructor Evaluation	4.41	4.61	0.045
Course Evaluation	3.44	3.64	0.058
Self–Evaluation	3.58	4.72	0.318
Average	3.87	4.15	0.072

items are #32, #35, #28 and #36. The students disagree that the course should be taught in some other way (–26.5%) and that the course material was too difficult (–23.1%). The scores reflect approval of the portfolio approach in #28 and #36. Students agree that the course was one of the best ever taken (31.1%) and should be required of all students (18.0%). Students acknowledge the effect of an increased workload (#27) by reporting that the amount of required work was not as appropriate (–2.7%). Gains were made in several student self–evaluation areas. Significant among these are #47, #45, #48, #41 and #46. Students report a 28.1% gain in greater tolerance for opinions different than their own, an increased ability to see the whole picture as well as the parts (22.8%), a greater appreciation for the subject matter (22.2%), an ability to apply course material to new situations (20.7%), and the development of an informed concern for contemporary social issues (20.4%).

Conclusion

Empirical evidence supports the notion that students have a higher commitment to learning when actively engaged. The portfolio approach to assessment encourages student involvement. Salemi (2002) identified several rationales that explain the success of active learning pedagogies. Student reaction to using a portfolio approach in the introductory economics course highlights the impact of these rationales.
1) Students reach a deeper understanding of concepts by developing creative thinking and problem–solving skills:

> This economics course has taught me to analyze situations first, before I come to my conclusion. I used to be the kind of person who would go with my first reaction rather than think about the situation and what the effect might be. I learned to think as an economist rather than an individual. The idea is to increase social well–being rather than trying to benefit myself. I learned that what is right for me would not necessarily help society as a whole. (M. Woodburn, F01)

> I have, also, found that through the writing of the position papers, I was offered a chance to voice my opinion in a way that I may not have ordinarily had. I was able to actually think like an economist and offer a solution to some of the problems that our country faces. If not for this class, I may have never had that opportunity, nor would I have done it on my own. The papers also helped me to understand the objectives much better by relating the issue to real life situations, like social security. Talking about it in class and taking notes is one way of understanding, but to actually write it down in an organized fashion and be forced to make sense of it, really helps to get the information to stick in

> your memory. (J. Fleming, F01)

2) Mutual respect in the student–instructor relationship is fostered:

> It seems to me, through all the research papers we have done, you gave us a chance to express ourselves as individuals, and it let you know what we have learned from your lectures and from the readings. I found out that there is no way you could have written a position paper well if you did not read the chapters it covered. As a teacher you probably know that there are students who do not like to read text material and just study from their notes. I could even be one of these, but you did a good job with the structure of your class. And you have definitely expanded my mind with information that I did not know was imaginable. Maybe, you even learned a bit about us in return. (K. Wysenski, F01)

3) Differences among student learning and assessment styles are capitalized.

Using a variety of pedagogical and assessment techniques increases the probability of student success. Lectures highlight foundation material. Discussions build on the realm of possibilities. Variety in assignments enables students to balance an area of weakness with one of strength. Progressive writing assignments push students from the passive role of audience to the active role of writer, thinker, and communicator. The position papers and haiku provide opportunities for critical thinking, creativity, and developing informed judgment on issues of real concern:

> When I entered class on the first day, I did not know what to expect and after going through what was expected of us I was not sure I was going to like it. I did not like the fact that we had to write all those papers. It seemed like so much at the time and I did not think I was going to be able to do it. But what I did not realize was that those papers were like our test. And by the end I was not at all upset about writing the papers. I actually came to enjoy them because they helped me understand the information much more than a test ever would. The reason I think they helped me so much was that I had to actually think about the topic before

> writing and had to connect it to something that was going on in the economy. (B. Sabo, F01)

4) A positive attitude toward economics is developed:

> I have a new–found likeness for economics. I actually read the business page now! I am aware of what the numbers mean and directly or indirectly how they affect my family and me. I have even chosen to take another economics class next semester. Trust me, this fact alone is astonishing as my interest in economics was nonexistent when I started. This class has definitely opened my eyes in more than one way. And I will try to show my children that they need to be a little more aware of how everything around them is affected in one way or another by economics. I don't want them to go through twenty–eight years of their life, like I did, being oblivious to that fact. (A. Cammalleri, F01)

5) Tolerance for different opinions and perceptions are encouraged through peer–to–peer exchanges:

> In class there were many different discussions. We discussed things from crime to social security to pollution to poverty and much more. Throughout those discussions there were many different views. Some people had the same view as I did, that made me feel that my view was right. Many people, also, had views there were different than mine. I had to think about those views and usually I would decide that both views could be correct. Before this class I thought that when dealing with economics there was one right answer and a lot of wrong answers. I now understand that there are many right answers and many wrong answers. By considering other peoples' views, I feel that I have become a better person, as well as, a better economist. (R. Boreman, F01)

6) Practitioners are challenged:

To be a successful practitioner of the portfolio approach requires a commitment of time that greatly exceeds the requirements of a chalk–'n–

talk pedagogy. This portfolio collection approach requires a commitment of time to search for the latest news, the most current statistical evidence, a commitment of in–class time to allow opportunity for verbal expressions from students, a commitment to read pages upon pages of response papers, and to fairly offer constructive suggestions for revision, and the task of rereading those same papers. Yet the commitment is not without rewards. Student growth is evidenced in the testimonials offered in the reflection papers. Acknowledgments from students who have used their newly acquired economic knowledge to win scholarships and awards is a source of personal satisfaction. And the improvement in student scoring on course evaluations reflects a high level of satisfaction with this approach. Portfolio assessments, employable across disciplines, appear to offer a one–way ticket to better course evaluations.

Endnotes

[1]A copy of this instrument can be obtained by contacting the author.

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Launching a Course in Writing for Children: At the Two Year College

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Even though the subject has an enormous following, few college English faculties today have attempted to offer a course in writing for children. Most parents and teachers would love to write for children and see their work in print. Yet many colleges who attempt to offer this subject fail. The course is scheduled, but enrollments falter, and the course closes. Since the desire is so universal, why is it hard to fill such a class?

I currently teach English full time at University of Cincinnati—Clermont, a two–year access college of about 2,500 students. I served as English coordinator and chair as our English department recently received approval to offer a course in writing for children for the first time. In the past, I have taught the subject in several settings: off–campus writing workshops, an M.A. program in writing, summer conferences, and a correspondence school. For about ten years before I returned to full–time college teaching a few years ago, I was steadily writing for children. My eleventh book for children is forthcoming in 2004, and I've published articles, reviews, and studies as well as a dissertation related to children's books. As I worked in this exciting world, I have come to know many other authors for children and how they have learned their craft. Overall, few new authors of books for children studied the subject of writing for children in college because for the past few decades colleges did not offer the subject. Yet authors benefit from knowing markets and publishing houses, genres, and the networking information about this large industry that helps authors figure out where they may fit in this varied field. However, special training in how to write for children is offered today in primarily noncredit and off–campus settings—– workshops at libraries and bookstores, summer conferences advertised in children's review journals, and the work groups organized by the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, a grass roots network with 10,000 members. If colleges are to succeed in this field, they must comprehend how unaffiliated instruction works, in both free and for–profit channels, and then apply these observations to their new credit courses or writing certificate program.

The primary vender today in writing for children is a correspondence school that is not part of a college or university but which is the largest program in writing for children in the United States. It is a for–profit school called the Institute of Children's Literature (ICL) based in Redding, Connecticut, near Danbury, offering only two courses and drawing 29,000 students per year. The business originated in the 1960s, with guidance from a small group of entrepreneurs, including editors from New York and two marketing experts who were renegades from the ranks of Proctor and Gamble. They liked children's books and understood how people could be motivated to study the subject without credit of any kind. The Institute of Children's Literature, or ICL, bought the buildings of a former school for wayward boys, set up a headquarters and mailing and editorial center, wrote the course using consultants working for hire, hired published authors as independent contractors to teach, and finally organized a mass marketing campaign. The program gradually succeeded and today dominates the market. Every year, about 29,000 students nationwide enroll in a single course, costing about $700, consisting of ten lessons, and taught entirely by authors who have published for children. Annual gross revenues of over $10 million support not only the pay of teachers and administrators but also production of substantial market guides and course manuals. There is no campus, no full–time faculty, and the course is not on the Internet at present. Instruction follows the old fashioned mail–based correspondence plan, and the institute is not affiliated or accredited by any institution of higher education. In fact, ICL is licensed as a trade school only by the state of Connecticut.[1]

Where were the colleges and universities during the forty years that this correspondence school came to dominate the field of teaching such a popular subject? Colleges and universities made three moves which effectively cut their potential for offering people significant instruction in this type of writing. First, the colleges and universities undersold their courses when they did offer them. Writing for children was usually relegated to adult and evening courses, rather than being offered in the regular college curriculum. While this attempt made it affordable and accessible to some citizens, the move also marginalized the subject, made it seem less serious, and caused the course to be unsupported by either marketing efforts or by course materials that organized and sequenced the study process into lessons. The University of Cincinnati is no exception in this regard. The Cincinnati campus offered a course in writing for children only through the College of Evening and Continuing Education, a college currently being disbanded and absorbed by Arts and Sciences. The instructor was usually a local free-lance writer. There was little or no special advertising except through word of mouth and the normal adult catalogue. With over 27,000 students, the Cincinnati main campus offers one course in children's writing out of 11,000 other courses. This pattern is typical of many universities in Ohio.

Meanwhile, here and there, various publishers sprang up who also delved into the instructional marketplace, for example, *Writer's Digest*, based in Cincinnati, Ohio. They have offered a downscaled, shorter course that competes with ICL. Like ICL, *Writer's Digest* hires published authors to teach the course part time, paying well above college part–time scales. The university–based evening course is hardly competition for the *Writer's Digest* course or for ICL, however, because our local evening adult course is like a poor country cousin when compared to the resources that support the highly developed correspondence systems into which major capital expenditures were made in curriculum and advertising. Cincinnati exemplifies a major urban area in which an invisible player is on our home field, competing for the available talent who want to learn the craft of writing for children, charging more and delivering more—at least more paper—to interested individuals. With a national presence in both cases, both *Writer's Digest* and ICL attract students through mass advertisements and charge far more for their noncredit courses than UC does for its own. The conclusion we might draw is that colleges and universities either have completely ignored the demand for the subject or else have underdeveloped and underpriced their offering and as a result are losing out to an invisible and silent giant.[2]

The second move that colleges and universities made in marginalizing the study of writing for children was to omit this subject from the curriculum requirements for teacher education. This failure originates at state certification level and is not a choice of the colleges. In Ohio as elsewhere teachers in training are generally required to take one three–hour college course in literature for children. Writing for children will not fulfill that requirement. In many large schools, literature for children is taught as an education course; in small schools it is an English course. In most programs, literature for children, or "kiddie lit" as it was called when I was in college, was taught by people with education degrees and not in literary study. As a result, the English Department does not have under its wing the feeder course that would help develop writing for children. And it does not have the force–feeding effect of state requirements.

The third move that colleges and universities made was not to charge students premiums and not to cater to highly educated prospects. The stigma attached to community college offerings for professionals may discourage participation. Meanwhile, a course that costs $700 and is taught by a published author who will work with students privately over time, with the mailbox as the only vehicle, is more appealing to this select audience because it is more individualized, as a tutorial, even though the student never meets the instructor face to face. It is also more personalized, an element that is stressed in the ICL program advertisements.[3]

Meaningful instruction in a growing area has been undervalued by institutions that presume they will be the primary deliverers using a classroom model. While the institutions put Cinderella to work sweeping the ashes from the grate, somebody out in the street took her to a party. Colleges neglected the writing side of children's literature because the full–time literature and creative writing people in academia usually are not published in children's areas and thus would not wish to teach writing children's books themselves; so, they neglected to go out and search for part–time faculty who could do it. While that occurred among colleges and universities, not only the correspondence schools like ICL, but summer institutes like the one at Vassar College, or those at Indiana University or Butler University, or M.A. programs like National Louis University with its multiple, far–flung campuses, and grass–roots organizations like SCBWI, and conferences like the Tristate Children's Literature Conference (Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio) drew editors and authors into their arms and organized opportunities for authors to lead workshops and classes. They took the reins of Cinderella's coach and headed for the ball. ICL invested in course development and produced impressive manuals and market guides. Among the authors who taught for ICL in their early careers were Lois Lowry, later a Newbery winner, Kristi Holl, author of 24 children's books, and many other award–winning authors. The colleges undersold their product but failed to invest in a successful structure and obtain crucial copyrights on the instructional materials. They miscalculated the mystique of the published author. With most Ph.D. programs actively discouraging a link to children's books as too slight for an English dissertation, the blind spot is passed on, and planned ignorance is still the order of the day in English faculties. If asked to name great books for kids, most of us would mention J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and update the list to include J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, but most of us couldn't cite many additional titles. A change in consciousness must occur in many parts of academia before children's books become more than a cultural blind spot.

As well as these three steps that left writing for children off the college curriculum, perhaps colleges and universities were also recognizing a sociological fact on the student side, that college–age writers who are talented often are not interested in children's books—yet. When I was in college, I wanted to become the next T. S. Eliot or Ernest Hemingway, but I was not thinking of the next Beatrix Potter, Beverly Cleary, or Judy Blume. Some of the best writers and best English students have not had the exposure to the world of children's books yet. Exposure to children's literature often comes only when students have children of their own.

A recent study in California by Karen Chapman Lenz found that the average age that children's authors publish their first book is 36. The same study also found interesting facts about children's authors. They married later than the general population and had slightly fewer children. A higher proportion were eldest or only children. About 65% of books for children are written by women, many of whom were tomboys. Obviously to have this high an average age of first publication, we are talking about women who discover in middle age or later that children's literature is a rich field worthy of their attention and talents. It is not that ICL and others targeted the housewife and then that this age group began to dominate the authoring but the other way round. ICL marketing experts realized that middle–aged women were their primary target because they are the ones who want to and do break into publishing. With the figures we have, middle–aged women are the most likely prospects for a course. They find advertisements about ICL in the women's magazines and newspapers and grocery store fliers. But they are unlikely to search out the listings of the local college. To help new writers flourish in writing for children, colleges and universities, too, have to catch the raw talent in the appropriate group and teach people what to do with it. Because the writer actually has more than one audience, it isn't easy to create the successful book for children. It takes savvy, finesse, and perhaps the parent's insight to please the gatekeepers––the librarians and reviewers who will choose the books and also the children who will read them. Even though middle–aged women are the primary market for new authors, colleges do not naturally turn to this potential student group in their regular curriculum.

Finally, the California study has found that the average author of books for children has been in a long–term, supportive marriage. This observation stands to reason; it often takes commitment and perseverance, a spouse with a paycheck coming in, as well as the disciplined work habits implied in a college degree to give the sustained effort to break into publishing for children. No one can dip a pen into the inkwell and run off a few stories while the laundry is in the dryer and the children are taking naps. It takes hard study and time.

Still another obstacle to colleges taking a lead in this subject is that experts in the field of English composition accept the theory that outstanding writing is caught, not taught. Peter Elbow, a noted scholar in composition, was recently asked to comment on the talent vs. instruction issue. He said he is "unsympathetic" to teachers who believe that everything is raw talent because "this often goes with a kind of snobbery: the attitude that some people can write and some can't." However, Elbow also draws away from the idea that structures and techniques can be taught in specifics. "I don't feel like I'm teaching skills or techniques, or the nature of good writing," he says. "I'm using my authority and intelligence . . . to set up certain conditions" (199).

Elbow seems ambivalent about whether one could teach principles of good writing or answer the sticky question whether what editors accept is good writing or commercial glitz. Elbow's doubts that defining what is good or offering sound advice on techniques will interfere with what students want in a course in how to publish for children. In my experience of teaching over 400 students over seven years for ICL, I found that most students had three questions in mind when they payed their $700: 1) Is the teacher an authority, to me? 2) Is the course constructed in such a way that I can understand what good writing is? 3) Will the teacher really care about my work? Over more than 30 years the ICL course, its student 800 number, its 400–page manual, and the individual letters of critique reassure students about these questions. Students do not pay any fees until they have reviewed the resume and writing credits of the specific instructor they will have.[4] They can request a specific instructor or change instructors in mid–course on request. Under Connecticut state laws for trade schools, ICL must offer a generous prorated refund policy, one that would make universities flinch. Colleges may not feel that they have to provide the same options or refunds as an independent course does because they have had the security blanket of the credits, requirements, and accreditation attached to so much of the curriculum. When students are not looking for credit, then they are especially looking for a sense of connection to a working author and proficiency sufficient to publish. Planners of the college course need to have these facts in mind. At the end of the course, students want to have marketing advice and at least one piece of polished, well–targeted material ready to send out to an appropriate editor. ICL specifically makes this promise in its ad and fulfills it in the course.[5] Colleges are not as used to making such specific goals. They have the comfort of offering, instead, credit hours the student needs to meet a certificate or degree requirement. ICL has understood outcomes and has built a successful business around them.

Other vigorous activity that colleges must recognize and either coordinate with or compete with goes on through the writers' own societies and organizations. Bookstores have often formed interest groups of would–be writers, like the Blue Marble Children's Bookstore in Kentucky, a model in this region. The Society of Children's Book Writers (SCBWI) has a web site and helps local writers meet and form organized critique groups, supported by book lists, publishers' directories, agent lists, and some instructional materials. There is no area of writing in America that is so well organized—certainly not the world of poets or fiction writers. In such groups, the appeal is simply that one will meet other writers striving for publication or that one will sit at the feet of a published writer. Very often the "master" does not read manuscripts. But if the author or speaker does read manuscripts, it is not at all unusual to receive 75–100 stories for every speech that one gives to writers.

Although ICL has a huge lead on us over the years in the marketplace, amongst all this activity, colleges and universities do have a certain natural advantage. But to realize that advantage, we need to clear away certain misconceptions. First, we need to understand that attracting education majors is problematic. They are very busy with requirements and writing for children is only an elective. We are probably more likely to draw working teachers or homemakers from outside than our own very busy and over–booked education majors. So we need some targeting off campus to reach them. Second, the course must realistically meet the needs and desires of its actual prospects. Only about half of ICL's students are working or retired teachers; the rest are spread across many businesses and professions. Likewise, the California study has shown that about half of the new authors for children are trained as teachers. In general, most new authors are very well educated. Colleges must plan the appeal widely.

Third, the course textbooks and instructor must be drawn from those who have published steadily in the recognized markets, and they must confidently offer individualized advice, especially classic principles of plotting, pacing, polishing, and practical advice on how to study the publishers and genres and submit work. Along with three other books, the textbook in my class is James Giblin's *Writing Books for Young People* (The Writer, 1995). Giblin's voice as an editor and working author will be superior, both in quality and in appeal to students, to more academic or textbookish choices. The emphasis is on specifics, skills and techniques, audiences, and the effects the writer wants, but it is not lesson–centered. Developing lessons and building a course sequence is the teacher's role. Giblin's voice, however, offers a steady stream of advice on how to think like a writer. In the right book, students glimpse an exciting world of how books are actually created. When Editor Margery Cuyler of Marshall Cavendish Publishers spoke on our campus at a conference last winter, she gave a keynote to hundreds of would–be authors, and then her small group session on techniques and inside information was packed with seventy–five participants. Her tone, like Giblin's tone, is not pedantic or merely theoretical, and she did not talk down to the audience. Editors who teach continually combat the two most common flaws of beginning writers for children–sentimentality and didacticism. While the right advice in never formulaic, talent and craft do go together.

Significant new work has gone into updating the old standby course for teachers in the literature for children. Glen Edward Sadler's recent survey, published by the Modern Language Association, which has recently organized a subgroup on children's literature, describes modern critical approaches, including mythical, historical, genre–based, and reader–response theories. Steps I have suggested can help departments to come into the modern world on the writing side. When the hunger in people to learn the craft of writing for children is nourished by intelligent, responsible courses given with the right tone, a wonderful result can emerge.

The two–year college may be the ideal home for such developments because of its natural growth thinking, its flexibility in designing certificates and special lines of study, its links to the wider community, its readiness to serve students who do not wish to enter a four year degree program or who cannot attend full time. A regional campus has the best of both worlds—both the link to facilities, libraries, and resources of the larger campuses, and the work that can be done in a smaller place. While capital outlays that launched the huge correspondence giants may be beyond the regional school, consortia can form synergy, and smaller programs can coexist with the giants. The smaller, two–year campus may be ideal for students who may already hold all degrees they desire. The four–year degree mentality of a main campus may actually work against the ideal program in writing for children. The intense focus on graduation rates that main campuses seem forced to deal with may be irrelevant to students interested in writing for children. The courses should be offered as a supplement to an A.A. or B.A., as part of an M.A., or as stand–alone work that does not require a college degree to begin. That approach would mirror the makeup of ICL. It would also mirror some successful regional programs like paralegal certificates which can draw people who already have a B.A. to a two–year college certificate. Whether the universities can adapt to such a procedure will be an issue. But, with a serious new investment, colleges and universities can join in holding the reins to Cinderella's coach. We can offer credit, channel bright, creative people into the important world of writing for children, expand the college's student pool, and offer the public something truly desirable.

The potential is enormous. Not only do tens of thousands of people each year desire to study this craft, but the doors of opportunity are wide. Over 5,000 new books for children are published every year. In addition, children are the readers for over 200 magazines which are largely produced from free-lance submissions. Textbooks and school publishers as well as Sunday school publishers rely on free-lance writers for assignments. Society needs not only the authors but also the future editors, reviewers, librarians, parents, and teachers who will share in selecting books for children. The mission is worthy, and the interested parties form an enormous artistic and economic resource for development.

Finally, we need to remember that authors, not schools, courses, or publishers create new books. Writing for children is finally not a trade but an art, and its cradle should be the university and college, simply because the world of children's writing is filled with surprises and turns. The success of Harry Potter as a new book by J.K. Rowling, a thirty–something British mother who often wheeled her toddler into a coffee shop and sat for hours scribbling her notebooks full of plotting and characters, surprised everyone in the children's book publishing. Her success disproved many assumptions educators have often repeated about length, grade level, reading levels, and age appropriate formulae. Through publishing sensations like Harry Potter, authors and their readers remind the public that we theorists, reviewers, and educators are only bystanders to the magic art of reading and to the imagination of children. The new author is never toadying to a curriculum guide but has a true liberal imagination educated in a wider framework and informed by the heart. Harry Potter is really a very traditional fellow, drawing upon English and American literary forbears. Beatrix Potter's genius was fed upon Shakespearean themes and language; she would spend lonely hours in her room reciting whole plays to herself aloud and by heart. Her first book was rejected repeatedly by publishers who said it was too short, to small, too this, and too that. Yet *Peter Rabbit* tapped deep themes and has sold over twenty million copies. Respect for creativity and its infinite surprise and variety belongs on the campus where understanding of rhetoric, the history of art, and the history of ideas give it a context. While commercial ventures have filled a vacuum for the past forty years, the final misconception we must clear away is that instruction can be too easily packaged or canned. Help can be marketed, without being overly canned. A steady stream of my ICL students did break into publishing, as do writers who take advantage of the offerings in workshops and writers' groups. Learning the craft is not easily done alone in one's garret. Contact with other authors is invaluable, and formal instruction can address techniques and shaping. While Peter Elbow, with his doubts that technique can be taught, may lack the forthright instructional urge, yet there is truth that the ideal writing program organizes mentoring and expresses that mysterious nature of new inspiration as well as the perspiration that the author invests.

The subject of writing for children belongs in the college curriculum. We have too often given children's books a back seat on the great bus of higher education, and now it's time to move them up front. As deliverers of instruction, we have real and formidable competition for instructional dollars, and we need to know what the course actually is and who our likely prospects are, or we will fail. Colleges cannot simply ignore competition from correspondence and for–profit ventures that have employed many smart people as teachers, payed them more than colleges do for part–time faculty, and developed a successful, student–tested curriculum over the years. As we develop college courses, we need to understand why the noncredit, correspondence model works, and then adapt it to our own strengths. There are no easy rules. James Giblin was once asked if he would be willing to read submissions that had talking animals in them. He replied, "That depends upon what they have to say." Like good competitors in any marketplace, if we will know our competition, their strengths, and weaknesses, we will come to the lively American marketplace better equipped to meet the competition.

Notes

[1]Advertisements for the Institute course carry this statement: "Recommended for college credits by the Connecticut Board for State Academic Awards and approved by the Connecticut Commissioner of

Higher Education."

[2]UC had talks within the past few years with at least one of the major giants in correspondence instruction about merger or joint programs, but the talks foundered as parties could not agree on what figure the credit hour would be worth, and UC wished to have supervision over the course and hiring of instructors. The president announced to faculty that one day this kind of merger might be necessary or wise, but at the present time, it could not work.

[3]Kristi Holl, as a current ICL instructor and author of 24 books and more than 100 stories and articles for children, is featured in the advertisement currently appearing in magazines such as *Country Living*: "My fellow instructors—all of them professional writers or editors—work with their students the same way I work with mine: when you've completed an assignment on your own schedule, at your own pace, you send it to me. I read it and reread it to make sure I get everything out of it that you've put into it. Then I edit it line–by–line and send you a detailed letter explaining my edits. I point out your strengths and show you how to shore up your weaknesses. Between your pushing and my pulling, you learn how to write—and how to market what you write." *Country Living*, October 2002, p. 73.

[4]Over the two years it normally takes to complete the lessons, students also have the option to pay in monthly installments of about $30 a month.

[5]"You will complete at least one manuscript suitable to submit to editors by the time you finish the course." By lesson eight, students have used market guides to find appropriate editors, planned article ideas suited to age group targets, genre specifics, and specific editors whose needs are found in the ICL guide, and they receive professional input on the editing and correction of completed manuscripts, along with instruction on how to submit. Thus, the promise of a suitable manuscript is met.

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Biography

Linda R. Walvoord recently completed the Ph.D. in English at the University of Chicago, with a focus in American literature and a link to children's books. Her study traced the image of Frederick Douglass from his death in 1895 to the recent past in biographies for children, with context on the standards of nonfiction writing and the cultural shaping of the black hero for children. She joined the University of Cincinnati—Clermont in 1997, where she teaches American literature and other literature courses, composition, and various writing classes. Under the name Linda Walvoord Girard, she has authored books and articles for children which appear in school and library collections. Her eleventh book for children, a picture book with a whimsical text entitled *Razzamadaddy* will appear in 2004 with Marshall Cavendish. Her previous books include *Who is a Stranger and What Should I Do?* (Whitman 1984), *Adoption is for Always* (Whitman 1987), *We Adopted You, Benjamin Koo* (Whitman 1988) and *Young Frederick Douglass* (Whitman 1994). She has taught at undergraduate and graduate levels as well as for the Institute of Children's Literature, and her critical essays on children's literature appear in journals, including *The Horn Book*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *The Five Owls*, and *Publishers Weekly.*

Conference Presentations

English Stories and the Moral Dilemma: Incidental Narratives and the Pedagogy of Critical Thinking

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A fundamental goal of higher education is to teach students to think critically. Education, when it works well, produces independent thinkers who can evaluate ideas and make rational decisions. Furthermore, this goal of higher education is congruent upon the higher goal of establishing an informed citizenry in a democracy. But critical thinking, even at the best of times, is a difficult thing to teach. At its core is the notion that a healthy, informed skepticism is a necessary part of disciplined reading, listening, and inquiring. Thus difficult questions, paradoxes, and hard–to–solve problems (dilemmas or ethical issues) are a key to this pedagogy, to helping students learn the habit of critical thought and engagement. The use of incidental narratives—stories we might tell to a class in order to pose a question, stimulate thought, or make a point—are often an important, perhaps even essential, method of instruction in critical inquiry or practice.

Through the following stories and observations, then, we are making a case for the efficacy of such narratives in the classroom. We will present our observations from two separate disciplines: English and psychology. In English, such narratives may be legendary accounts of famous writers, or they may be stories related to teaching itself, perhaps even the instructor's learning. In psychology, similar narratives have been used to demonstrate the development of moral or ethical faculties in people, a sometimes difficult and occasionally painful task. Each of these narratives has its own virtues, purposes, and attractions, but all have been used effectively in classes for years. Interestingly enough, sometimes they also engender a sense of mystery in students' thoughts, and this too seems a pedagogical advantage in terms of generating interest, capturing attention, and stimulating speculative thought—another key to effective critical discourse.

I: Stories Used in the English Classroom

To make discussions of the following narratives easier to follow, we will refer to them as "The Frost Story," "The Stevens Story," and "The Kousaleous Story." Following the narratives as a whole will be a brief discussion of their meanings and practical pedagogic implications.

In the Frost Story, poet Robert Frost finishes the reading of one of his poems at Harvard University's library only to be asked by a graduate student, "Yes, but what does the poem mean?" Frost responds by saying, "It means . . ." and then proceeds to read the poem again in its entirety.

In the Stevens Story, a fan of the poet Wallace Stevens is said to have journeyed a long way to Hartford, Connecticut, to visit Stevens in his office at the large insurance company where he worked. The fan has a discussion with Stevens, but upon leaving the front door of the insurance company pauses before the most junior clerk sitting at a small desk near the door and says, "My God! Do you realize who you have in there?" The clerk looks up and replies, "Let me tell you something, pal. I write better insurance than that guy does."

The Kousaleous Story is a personal account of Scott Minar, one of the authors of this article. He tells the story in this way:

> When I was a graduate student in the 1980s, I came out to the hallway of Ohio University complaining about the fact that my students were not learning how to use semicolons effectively, despite the fact that I had devoted a substantial amount of class time on three separate occasions to the issue. My colleague, Professor Peter Kousaleous, responded with the following story: "During World War II, I was a Marine Sergeant stationed in the Pacific theater. My job was to get soldiers onto the beach during the day, order the digging of foxholes, and get them into them before we moved into the jungle at night. I told all of them that no matter how hot it became or how bored they were, they had to keep their helmets on and stay in the foxholes throughout the day because there were snipers in the trees at the edge of the jungle. Invariably, somebody would get hot or bored, take his helmet off, and go sit under a palm tree, only to be shot by a Japanese sniper. There I was telling people things trying to save their lives, and they wouldn't listen

to me. And you're complaining because your students won't listen to you about semicolons?"

Meanings and Pedagogic Implications

Regarding the Frost Story, one might observe that poetry is a difficult art, so it is not crazy to suggest that poems mean themselves or, to put it another way, "exactly what they say and suggest." If we do not understand a poem, we have to experience it more and think about it longer. Frost seems to imply through his response to the inquiry that we shouldn't turn to an outside source, and particularly not the author, for affirmation or explanation. Frost appears to be both teaching and making an artist's statement here. In part, his response may also suggest that poets themselves don't know what their poems mean, but they may be more familiar with what they are: these words, in this order, sounding this way, and suggesting these ideas or emotions. This implication may be more nebulous than suggesting what poems mean in any definitive sense. Poets may well be attracted to the nebulous, to ephemera because this is where they often find poetry. The act of writing a poem is often an exercise in trying to understand that which may be beyond us; this is what T. S. Eliot referred to as the attempt to "say the unsayable." It may also help to consider poetry's competitor: prose. Exposito ry prose is by definition and convention definitive; poetry, on the other hand, is suggestive, intimative. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the various elements that make up a good poem: the music of the words, the suggestive quality of the images and statements, the look of the poem on the page and how that affects the reader's steady consumption of the music, the words and their meanings, i.e., the poem as a whole. Good poems are organic in the literary sense. If you take an organ out of the body, it gets sick or dies. Frost may be suggesting a similar idea about the relationship between poetic art and the analytical method. Some poets believe that to distill a poem down to its meaning as one might state that in a sentence or two of prose is actually to make the poem less, to weaken it through inadequate translation. Thus, Frost's deceptively simple or seemingly absurd response—a kind of paradox—may represent a significant argument from the writer's or art lover's point of view. The pedagogical value of deciphering Frost's actions here may be quite high. The narrative presents a difficult mystery to unravel, but the intellectual rewards of doing so may be profound.

The Stevens Story appears to play with the notion that the relationship between poetry and the real world is notoriously insubstantial. It is not a prominent or important feature in the lives of most people. So this story accomplishes two things. First, it brings comic relief to the notion of a poet's importance in the world outside of academia. (The suggestion is that such an importance often doesn't exist. In the context of the narrative, Stevens may be a great poet, but he's a lousy insurance underwriter.) This humor is ironic: writing great poetry should be more difficult than writing insurance—considering that we could probably count the number of great poets alive in any single nation on one hand. However, we might also view this irony as being doubled. To put it another way and in the terms of literary theory, this story also seems to "deconstruct" itself: Stevens, it appears, is actually appreciated by the higher–ups at his insurance company, so the narrative is double–edged. The strong implication at the narrative's end is that Stevens' bosses are keeping him on because he is a famous poet and certainly not due to his capabilities as an insurance underwriter. The narrative's humor, charm, irony or "self–deconstructing" quality may be different ways of describing a similar group of narrative features. This story thus both possesses charm and constitutes an interesting exercise in critical inquiry, with the latter found in simply trying to unravel its narrative implications.

Finally, the Kousaleous Story appears interesting on a number of levels. One of its illustrative principles seems to imply that few of us estimate the teaching of writing at the level of difficulty it actually occupies for the practitioner. For a number of reasons, it is a difficult and vexing job. Yet teachers perhaps can ill afford to think that way. They, it seems, can only keep spirits up and attitudes healthy in the attempt to accomplish something in the classroom. Yet when students don't learn, teachers more often than not appear to blame themselves. How much of this blame is justified? One reasonable answer may be only half of it; this estimation seems reasonable, given the sharing that goes on in the two sides of the educational process. There is a difference between teaching and learning, and teachers must be constantly aware of that difference and act or perceive accordingly. The final analysis seems to indicate that if teaching doesn't work out the way one might wish it to sometimes and if a teacher has done his or her best, then he or she should sometimes accept the limitations of the profession itself, of the difference between teacher and learner. Each has a role to play; each is responsible for a part of the process. The Kousaleous Story has the unique feature of being both an interesting counterexample for students and reality check for teachers. When used as a critical and pedagogical device in the classroom, however, it can also be somewhat awe–inspiring and possess the capacity to move students emotionally and motivate them through its somewhat morbid but nonetheless interesting comparison.

The Heinz Dilemma and Developmental Psychology

From a psychological standpoint, critical thinking entails metacognition, the evaluation of multiple perspectives, and placement of the self in relation to these perspectives. Metacognition is thinking about one's own thoughts and mental processes. When you know that you don't know the meaning of a word you just read, or you realize that a desire you harbor is self–serving, metacognition is at work. In addition to metacognition, a critical thinker must apprehend the differing perspectives that may exist regarding an issue. For example, the critical thinker knows that some people believe that gender differences are physiologically and perhaps even genetically determined. Others believe that society and a person's upbringing are the primary determinants of gender differences. Weighing the arguments pro and con constitutes an evaluation of the differing positions. Placement of the self in relation to these perspectives means that the critical thinker reaches a decision as to which position she or he finds most convincing.

One theory about the development of critical thinking proposed a progression in the sophistication of thinking that follows a stage–like pattern. William Perry (1999) established a scheme in which students progress through nine positions. The beginning position is *dualism,* in which knowledge is viewed as a collection of information and ideas are either true or false. Dualistic thinkers view the role of instructors as imparting their special knowledge of what is true to students. As education proceeds, the student's thinking advances toward a middle position of *contextual relativism* in which knowledge is not connected to absolute truth. Truth exists only within a specific context and is evaluated by the reasoning that supports it. Several different points of view may be equally legitimate. At the final position, *commitment*, the thinker acknowledges the different viewpoints but judges for herself or himself which is favored. In a sense, the thinker sees herself or himself as an authority.

Gender may play a significant role in the progression of students toward thinking critically, and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) posit a set of categories of thinking based on data collected from female respondents. In the *received knowledge* category, information and truth come from authority figures. In a different category, *subjective knowledge*, knowledge is acquired and possessed by the thinker from personal experience. *Procedural knowledge* refers to thinkers who may differ in the procedures they use to acquire knowledge. Some strive to be objective and independent while others seek to connect with people to share in their experiences and knowledge. The category of *constructed knowledge* describes individuals whose rational or scientific thought processes generate knowledge.

Baxter Magolda's (1992) *Epistemological Reflection Model*, based on data from both males and females, described patterns of thinking that are related to but not determined by gender. In the *absolute knowing* pattern, there is certainty about what is correct and the instructor's job is to communicate that information. In *transitional knowing*, students accept knowledge as partially uncertain and strive to understand it. In *independent knowing* knowledge is accepted as uncertain and everyone has their own beliefs, although the thinker does think for herself. In *contextual knowing*, the thinker evaluates different perspectives and supporting evidence. Students view themselves as working together with teachers to progress in understanding.

Fostering Critical Thinking in a Psychology Class

At the present time, many instructors actively strive to promote critical thinking in their college classes, and resources exist to advise them (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 2000; Elder and Paul, 2002). In a psychology class that covers the topic of human development, it is possible to employ an exercise derived directly from the material being covered. The study of moral development began with Piaget (1932/1965) whose work was built upon by Lawrence Kohlberg (1963). Kohlberg assessed moral reasoning by posing a series of moral dilemmas (Colby and Kohlberg, 1987). Each dilemma was presented as a brief story in which a question was posed at the end. By inviting the class to resolve a moral dilemma, instructors may encourage students to think critically.

One of Kohlberg's dilemmas is known as the Heinz Dilemma. It is easily recited to a class and proceeds as follows:

> Heinz was a man who lived in Europe, and whose wife was dying from cancer. There was one drug which might save her, and a druggist living in the same town as Heinz had discovered it. The druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. Heinz went to everyone he knew to borrow the money but could only get together about half of what it cost. Heinz went to the druggist to ask him to sell it to him cheaper or to let him pay the rest later. The druggist refused, so Heinz, in desperation, broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should Heinz have done that? Why or why not?

Class discussion of the Heinz Dilemma creates an opportunity for students to think critically by calling on them to analyze their own thinking, recognize different points of view, and place themselves in relation to a particular point of view. Lively classroom discussions of dilemmas are common and most students are willing to voice an opinion. Students are compelled to consider and evaluate differing perspectives. Interaction of a student's reasoning level and peer influence may also trigger advances in thinking through modeling in which more advanced reasoning is heard from one or more members of the group.

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Biographies

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Intercultural Service Learning: Alternative Strategies Learning Theory

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to recommend a new methodology of intercultural education built on performance and learning from theory. This paper recommends an action–oriented methodology based on Dewey's learning theory (Dewey, 1938). The paper offers an overview of current intercultural education and training methodologies and explains service learning pedagogy in the intercultural area. Some means of implementing service learning in an intercultural communication course are offered.

Out of the Classroom—Into the Community

Two years ago, I felt my students were suffocating in the classroom. They read about the theories and issues related to different cultures but never really fleshed out their knowledge. Their questions were interesting, but I was not able to give them solid enough answers to satisfy their needs. I began wondering what I could do beyond the traditional classroom setting to reward their curiosity while still teaching the fundamental theory and supporting facts related to cross–cultural communication. After considering my options, I decided that a service learning strategy could be an effective tool for extending pedagogy and classroom learning to students' experiences in the real world.

As part of an intercultural communication class, students were asked to use theories of cross–cultural communication to implement a service learning project. The intention was to directly study the values and beliefs of another culture through personal interaction to further develop an understanding of cross–cultural terminology. Students would also learn increased tolerance for other cultures through knowledge rather than speculation.

Ideally, cross–cultural communication classes should be designed to empower students by providing possibilities for them to have direct experience with the subjects discussed in class. Such cross–cultural service learning helps students to extend their education outside the classroom by getting involved in projects directly benefiting their communities. One of the most important points is that students learn about their own culture and biases, stereotypes and their ethnocentrism.

What Is Service Learning?

In its simplest terms, service learning combines traditional classroom experiences with significant experiences in field placements where pertinent social issues are being played out. Service learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with a structure designed to promote student learning and development. According to Godfrey (1999), "Service learning pedagogies stand apart from much of traditional business education in that these pedagogies do not seek, nor claim, value neutrality" (365). People learn by concrete experiences with the real world, by reflective observation of their own lived experience, and by active experimentation to discover cause–and–effect relationships or to determine which of many solutions prove viable (Godfrey, 1999). Service learning pedagogies find legitimacy in higher education because the important learning takes place as a result of the combination of abstract conceptualization and concrete experience with reflection on the entire experience.

Rationale and Philosophy of Using Service Learning in the Classroom

Cross–cultural service provides the community with both a service (from the students) and feedback (from the agency), thereby reinforcing the curriculum. Cross–cultural service learning provides students with opportunities to use skills and knowledge in real–life situations. It enhances what is taught in class by extending learning beyond the classroom. Students develop intellectually through active participation in thoughtfully organized experiences led by experts in the field (Jocoby, 1996). They move toward understanding the feelings of a group and the realization that other cultures are usually not the same as their own. We know people generally learn by observing and participating much better than by just reading (Bandura and McDonald 1963). It is easy to describe theory, but it does not hit home until students experience their own ethnocentrism and have had opportunities to reflect upon it.

A deep and abiding truth is that when we help others, we help ourselves. We learn things about others, about life, and about ourselves that are enriching, even ennobling. Service learning enriches students and provides services to the larger community by creating situations in which students help others (Boyer, 1996).

As a faculty member, I also discovered that service learning brought new life to the classroom and enhanced student performance on traditional measures of learning. It increased student interest in the subject discussions, taught them new problem–solving skills, and made teaching more enjoyable for me. Through this project, I discovered cross–cultural service learning to be an indispensable method in educating citizens. Not enough can be said about gaining an understanding of someone else's culture firsthand. I found that in the class with service learning, the students had higher academic achievement on their final writing. Other research supports the contention that service learning has a positive impact on personal, attitudinal, moral, social, and cognitive outcomes (Bringle, 1996; Cohen and Kinsey, 1994; Giles and Eyler, 1994). In the best cases, students see their ethnocentrism and their own prejudices and learn about their own beliefs when they reach a point of reflection. (This point is a final paper or project in my classes.) They often see that they have been evaluating people from other cultures based on the values of their own culture, a natural reaction because we use our own world view to validate our experiences. Through cross–cultural service learning, we learn that each culture provides its own logic.

Cross–cultural service learning can broaden and enrich a teacher's sense of how diversity increases the community's potential to be a more powerful learning community. Therefore, future teachers can expand their understanding of talent and of the eagerness of students to serve others through sharing their talents (Claus and Ogden, 1999). Service learning activities teach students that learning is a socio–contextual process most powerful when collaboration and reciprocity are valued

(Eyler and Giles, 1999; Swick, 1999). Furthermore, educational researchers have found that when students participate in service learning, they develop problem–solving skills and social competence (Meyers, 1999).

According to Krystal (1999), service learning is transforming experience. Students who are lost are lured back to academia because of service learning. Those with little respect for others can develop loving relationships with adopted partners from other cultures.

Service Learning Project

In March 2000, I offered an upper–level course in cross–cultural differences at Ohio University—Zanesville. I used service learning to underscore the objectives of the course and to enhance the lives of students in class and community life. With service learning, I promoted the idea of learning as a socio–contextual process. To promote collaboration and reciprocity, I required students to use information from classroom lectures to guide them in their hands–on community work.

In this course I did not deny the very real value of traditional pedagogical strategies in some contexts, for some purposes, and for some students. Obviously, no single strategy will work all of the time for all students. But if traditional lecture, discussion, and individual research projects—all of which I use in my classes—continue to serve a useful purpose, contemporary circumstances call for more strategies like collaborative learning, problem–based learning, learning communities, and community–based learning. The benefit of service learning is that it addresses these new approaches in a coherent way. I have been able to adopt the strong points of both traditional and more experiential pedagogies to strengthen the class.

Students received instruction to make contact with someone from another culture and country. They were provided with lists of people they could contact. They also had the option of choosing someone on their own. Throughout the length of this contact, they were to learn about the person's culture, beliefs, values, customs, and principles. They were also to teach their own culture, customs, and beliefs to their new friends. For the final step in the process, students wrote reflective papers about their experiences. They shared their thoughts through the papers and in formal presentations to the class.

Results

In addition to reflective papers and presentations, they also responded to a survey from me. In their responses, all the students stated that the cross–cultural service–learning project was the most valuable learning activity they had ever experienced. It made a difference in their lives and communities. They noted that they felt like a part of their friends' communities and that they had served those communities as well as their own. In short, they learned from the experience. I found their comments personally satisfying because they epitomized my objective in adopting the strategy in my class.

One of the students wrote, "I never knew how difficult it was for international people to live in the United States. They are missing their families, but they are willing to accept and tolerate the conditions just because they wanted to help their families survive and be proud of them." The students' papers and reports indicated that they learned the meaning of key concepts from the course: *individualism,* the *stranger,* and the *collective culture.*

Another student wrote, "I was so quick to evaluate and judge people during my interaction with people from another culture. I learned during this activity that this behavior is not right. For example, during my communication and interaction with them, I learned if they do not have good eye contact or if they do not eat the same foods that I eat, if they are late in their appointment, I do not have a right to evaluate them based on my cultural worldview. In the past I have done it, and my judgment interferes with my intercultural communication and better understanding of others' cultures."

The student who met with a Pakistani family wrote, "The family was very well–known in the community but did not have much interaction with the community." The father in the family was a prominent physician, and this intimidated the student somewhat. She was initially unsure about approaching the family to discuss their religion, fearing that she might offend the father. To her credit, she overcame her reluctance and broached the topic. The student reported, "I am so lucky to know this family. They provided so many details about their religion (Islam) that I could not even learn these facts in books. They were friendly and very interesting . . . I think I will continue to have a friendship with them as long as I live in this area . . . I am glad to have an opportunity to know the role of the family members and to observe the position of the women in this society . . . More than anything, this project helped me to kill two birds with one stone. I built a great relationship, friendship, and taught some of my cultural beliefs to my new friends from another part of the world. At the same time, I learned about their religion and their death ritual, which helped me to take care of a project in a thanatology class . . . I learned very important concepts and challenged many of the ways I think about intercultural communication specifically."

This course linked classroom discussion with a practical experience component of our learning experience. This component is not normally addressed in real life or in the classroom. This "project reciprocity" was central to the partnership; both sides perceived benefits. Students gained a culturally diverse, authentic community context for their future lives. The community members gained increased knowledge and an understanding of the American culture. Reciprocity signified an interconnection between teaching and learning in this project and in the university and broader communities. In addition, networking with the city's international community created a good exchange. The students learned from one another and initiated collegial relationships between their culture and the diverse cultural communities of their friends in the community. Relationship building underpinned a partnership and fostered a sense of the interdependence within communities.

Much research focuses on the potential benefits of service learning. This study suggested that cross–cultural service learning motivated and engaged students and enlarged the pool of available community resources for the students. Service learning can be an effective methodology for bringing formal theory into the classroom. By observing and through reflective writing, participants internalize relevant theory of the field.

Through this service–learning project, my students gained confidence in their skills and developed a sense of pride and of belonging in their community. These are especially important benefits for students with no knowledge of other cultures who frequently experience lower self–esteem and problematic knowledge about other cultures.

Interpersonal relationships are most meaningful for our students when they come in contact with other people from other cultures. My students learned about other cultures' rules and beliefs. They learned not to judge people quickly. Most important, perhaps, they uncovered their own ethnocentrism or prejudices, concepts I did not have the equipment to teach them in the classroom.

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Biography

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A Contractual Approach to Setting Expectations in the Classroom

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1. Background and Motivation

During the past several years, the Computer Science faculty at University of Cincinnati—Raymond Walters have observed an exceedingly high number of students who either withdraw from or are unsuccessful (i.e., not earning a passing grade, specifically a C or better) in early computer science (CS) core courses. Based upon the number of students withdrawing from and those receiving failing grades in such courses, we informally estimate the amount of first year student attrition ranges from 40 to 60 percent.

In addition to the attrition, we have observed that the majority of beginning students arrive ill prepared to invest the time and effort required to be successful in these CS core courses. With the job market for information technology and computer–related careers being relatively lucrative (even in slower economic times), coupled with the fact that a majority of students have used computers since early childhood, students arrive with the preconceived notion that CS courses will be a quick and easy pathway to achieve a high–paying career.

2. Solution Strategy

Initial approaches to reducing the high attrition rate amongst first year CS students has involved verbal discussions with the students during the initial class meetings, informing them of what would be expected from them. This procedure involved discussions with the students regarding the amount of work and time requirements, both in the classroom and out, attendance, participation, homework completion, and so forth. In addition, many of these expectations were also documented in course syllabi, homework assignments, and projects. The students largely ignored this information, and the attrition rates continued to reflect this.

After it became clear that this information provided to the students was continually ignored, the idea was developed to create a single document that spelled out exactly what the CS faculty expected of our students. Areas where problems existed and solutions to these, as well as other general issues, were discussed between CS faculty, and after a period of time, these ideas were consolidated into a single document. It was decided the format would be such that the document would describe what the students could expect from the faculty (since many of the students were college freshmen), what we (the CS faculty) would in turn expect from the students, and what the business community would expect from the students once they completed school and entered the business community.

Some of the expectations presented in this document should have been obvious to students; however, experience has shown that they still needed to be reminded (e.g., the necessity to come to every class on time and to pay attention). Other expectations presented may be somewhat new to students. For example, in a computer–related discipline, if an assignment (i.e., program, network configuration, etc.) is completed and does not work 100%, it is really not worth much. Thus, this sort of performance on a class assignment or project will not get a student a passing grade, no matter how much time was spent or how close to working the system was.

Fearing that merely distributing a document of this sort would be ignored or discarded, we conceived of the idea to try to impress upon the students the importance of understanding what would be expected of them. The approach that was implemented was to present the expectations document as a contract with the students. As a contract might imply, the students would be asked to read the expectations document, followed by their signing of the document stating that they indeed read the document and understood its meaning and implications. The students would keep the expectations portion of the document, and a CS faculty would keep the signature page. The intended purpose of asking students to sign the document was twofold: first, it was intended to impress upon the students the serious intent of the expectations, and secondly, by keeping the students' signature, the instructor could discount any complaint used in the future when students made claims such as "I didn't know you meant ALL of my assignments had to be handed in on time!"

Students were presented with the document on the first day in their core CS classes. As much as 5% of first quarter class time was devoted to discussing with the students the document and its intentions. Faculty asked if the students had questions regarding the document and answered any that were brought forth. Additionally, as behaviors that were outlined in the expectations document occurred (e.g., not doing homework), faculty continued to remind students of the document, its importance, and the students' agreement. A copy of the entire document appears below.

3. The Expectations Document

Computer Support Technology Expectations

The faculty of the Computer Science Department welcomes you to the Raymond Walters College Computer Support Technology (CST) Program.

The following recommendations and expectations are presented to you, as a beginning student, to help you be as successful as you desire, and to make your time in classes at RWC as productive and rewarding as possible.

Student Expectations

As a CST student, you may expect:

- guidance from your instructors based upon a large amount of experience and technical knowledge, both from an industry and from an academic perspective.
- your instructors to be available to answer questions, both in class and outside of normal classroom hours. This would typically include in–person questions as well as questions asked electronically (e.g., via email).
- your instructors to provide documentation as to what work is

expected and when it is due, in the form of distributed or on–line based documents.

- the material presented to help you to understand how computers work and how to manipulate their functions in a way that is not tied to specific hardware, software or vendor.
- your grades to be directly related to the amount of effort and dedication that you put forth.

Faculty Expectations

Since you have chosen the Computer Support Technology pathway, the RWC Computer Support faculty will expect each student:

- to have a genuine interest in the subject matter related to this field of study. We will assume that you have a strong desire to learn material related to this field, enjoy learning this material, and are willing to work hard to learn and understand this material.
- in this field to adopt an inquisitive and exploratory attitude as well as corresponding work habits.
- to focus on learning, and not to focus solely on grades. Good grades will come to any student who works hard to learn and understand the material.
- to approach each course as a long–term learning process. This means that knowledge obtained in one course may be needed in a course taken in the future. When a period of time elapses between course periods (e.g., Christmas or summer break), the student should actively research and review topics from previous courses which may have become unclear. This means everything you learn in one programming assignment, lab exercise, lecture or course is likely to be useful in a future assignment or course, as well as in your career.
- to arrive on time to class, and depart only when the class (or lab work) is complete.
- to organize all of your notes and classroom materials such that the material is easily referenced when needed (e.g. to study or to use during an exam).
- to pay attention to the instructor during the entire class period, and not to play with cell phones, beepers, games, email, Internet surfing,

other class assignments, etc.

- to take detailed notes during class lectures and to compare notes with other students to make sure of completeness.
- to complete all of the assigned reading, whether in required class texts, other related texts and/or related material online or on the Internet. In addition to reading, you will also be expected to understand the material read, and ask questions when you don't fully understand. This can easily be accomplished by taking notes during the reading and asking questions as appropriate (e.g., before/during/after class).
- to understand that any and all assignments, whether reading, homework problems, programs, or assignments of any type must be completed before class on the date they are due. The student may expect severe penalties for late or incomplete assignments.
- to spend the appropriate amount of time outside of the classroom, studying and/or working on any assignments. This amount of time will depend upon the specific class, and should be at least 2, probably more, for each hour of in class time (e.g., a 3–credit–hour class would require at least 6 hours work outside of class per week).
- to spend the necessary amount of time in the school's laboratory facilities when that is the only place that hardware or software is available.
- to understand the difference between collaboration (which is encouraged) and copying/cheating which is prohibited, and will be dealt with severely (refer to *Student Code of Conduct*).
- to be less dependent upon the teacher as courses progress, understanding and solving his or her own questions and problems (and using problem solving abilities learned along the way).

Real World Expectations

We believe the journey you have begun will take you from the classroom into the business world as an employee in the information technology arena. As we conclude our recommendations, those of us who have spent time in the business community would like to offer some rules which hold true in the business world. We suggest that you consider these as you proceed through the Computer Support Technology program.

- Your employer will pay you to come to work during the hours they specify; they will not pay you to show up when you want and come and go as you please.
- Your employer will pay you for doing all of your work; they will not pay you to do half of your work.
- Your employer will pay you to complete tasks fully when they specify; they will not pay you to complete tasks when you wish.
- Your employer will expect the tasks they assign you to be complete and correct; they will not pay you for tasks which are incorrect or incomplete.
- Your employer will expect you to take the initiative to figure out how to complete your job or current assignment; they will not continually show you how to do your job.
- Your employer will not show you where to click.
- Your employer will care about successful project results; they will not care how hard (or how much time) you worked on an incomplete or incorrect project.
- Your employer will not listen to you whine about how he or she is not fair.
- Your employer will not care what else you're working on, or when it's due, when they assign additional work.
- Your co–workers will not continually do your job when you don't show up for work.
- A network, a system, or a program that is not complete or correct is worthless, even if it is 90% complete or correct.

Having presented these, each of the above will relate directly to your work and your success in this program.

Good Luck!

Student Agreement

I, the undersigned, have read and understand all of the expectations of the CST program stated above. I also understand that deviation away from these expectations could have a direct negative effect on my success in the completion of this program or classes therein.

__________________________________ Print Name

__________________________________ Signature of Student

_______________________ Date

4. Observed Results

As an indicator for measuring the results, a beginning first quarter core course in the Computer Support Program (math for computer logic) was used. This course is the entry point into the Computer Support Degree Program and a prerequisite for all following courses. Following the first distribution of the contractual expectations document, a dismal 64 percent of students did not successfully complete (i.e., C or better) this first quarter Computer Science prerequisite course (of 47 total, 17 passed with a C or better).

5. Conclusions

It is worth noting that the course used to indicate the above results is a standard beginning computer science course and was taught according to specific guidelines published by the ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) two–year college (ACMTYC) curriculum guide and was not beyond what these students should be expected to understand.

It is also worth noting that it is difficult to determine, without much personal investigation, what other events, if any, contributed to the attrition rate remaining relatively constant. For example, did a student do poorly due to family, health, or work concerns, or was it due to lack of preparation and failure to complete the required work.

Thus, the conclusions drawn, given the results of success, even the students' being presented with the expectations document, are that students continue to underestimate the commitment, in both effort and time, that the Computer Science (and the related IT) discipline demands.

6. Future Plans

Since it is not clear whether students fully and completely understood the serious nature of the expectations as presented to them, future plans include taking this a step further and presenting this document in an orientation for incoming CS students. The format for this will likely be an informal gathering, prior to the start of the fall school year, in which the expectations document is presented to the students and then discussed with them in detail by several of the computer science faculty. Questions could be asked and answered for all students present to understand.

7. Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Professor Kenneth Koehler and Mrs. Pamela Lineback for their input and feedback on the original expectations document.

8. Correspondence

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Learning Through Asking Questions

Bozena Barbara Widanski
University of Cincinnati—Clermont

A Problem

Why do college students not ask questions? I have been asking myself why students in college do not ask questions as often as they do in kindergarten. Why do students not retain the curiosity they had at the beginning of their education? Is this because they learn that asking questions might put them in trouble? Truly, in our schools teachers ask questions and expect students to learn the answers. Many teachers teach the way they were taught (Cross, 1990), oriented around the answers. However, many of us agree that the interaction between teachers and their students is very important in teaching any subject (Darling–Hammond, 1990) and that students are not learning if they are passive receivers of knowledge (Mestre, 1994). Those researches imply that students do not learn science by absorbing facts but by critical thinking and working through the problems. When students think critically, they can ask appropriate questions to absorb meaningful information.

The relationship between a teacher's classroom questioning behavior and a student's achievement has been an extensively researched topic (Cotton, 88). All the research has been concentrated around the teacher, not around the learner. However, based on the latest empirical findings by Huddle (2000) that chemistry courses have experienced worldwide decreasing success rates in recent years, we should seek different ways to get students more actively involved in their courses and let the students ask questions.

Approach to the Problem

In an attempt to improve students' learning and success in the future, I have tried the strategy of learning through asking questions in my chemistry courses. My assumption was that a good science student is the one who asks the thoughtful questions and that students learn more efficiently when actively involved in questioning on their own. Subsequently, as science students are progressing in their learning, they should further develop critical thinking skills, deepen their knowledge, and be motivated to learn more about the subject. When the curiosity is stimulated, the students will ask more and more questions.

Students should ask the questions not only during the class but also outside the classroom. Increasing Web–based communication with students and extending this communication beyond the classroom may increase classroom participation. Therefore, teachers should encourage the students to ask informative and useful questions to gain information they need to solve problems. Incorporating critical thinking in solving problems and thoughtful questioning should lead to higher academic performance.

In my organic chemistry classes, taught in the 2001–2002 academic year, I used questions as a learning tool to assess the students' understanding of assigned reading. Before each class, students had assigned selected readings from the chemistry textbook and were asked to send entry questions, questions that they had before the lecture and after reading the assigned material. Students were instructed to focus on what they were reading, think for themselves, write down the questions induced by the material read, and submit those questions to me through email.

To make the learning more efficient, I involved technology in implementing my new teaching strategy of asking meaningful questions. I found out that *Blackboard*, a Web–based software, could be a very useful way to ask questions. In my organic chemistry classes, the students were asking the questions and finding the answers on their own using *Blackboard 5* software.

Results

The submission of the questions and answers through *Blackboard* provided part of the data for analysis. Other significant data was collected through: (1) observation, (2) a survey, (3) pretest and final test. Participation of students (excluding working in small groups) during the class discussions was observed and recorded. As **Figure 1** (p.171) shows, students that asked entry questions before the lecture were more

Figure 1. Students that participated (P) or did not participate (NP) during class, and used "Entry questions" (EQ) or did not use "Entry questions" (NEQ). [%]

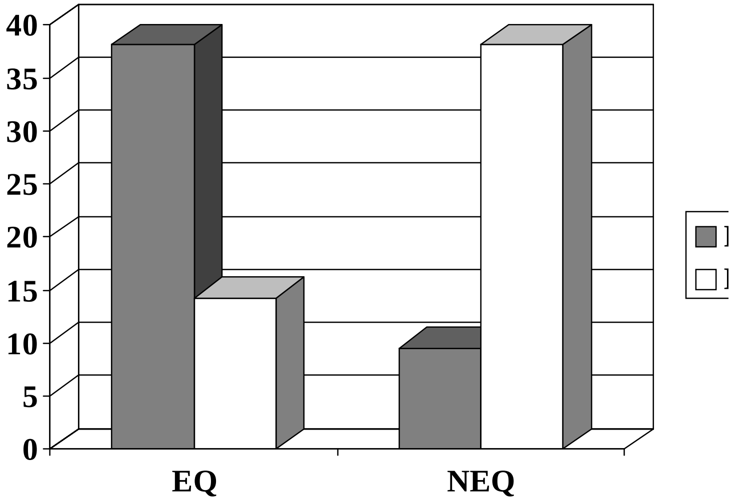
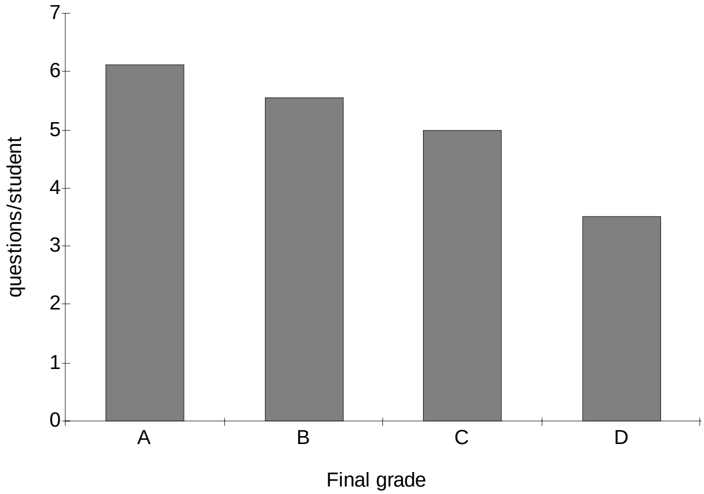


Figure 2. Number of good questions asked



active and asked more questions during the class. In contrast, the students who did not ask entry questions before the lecture did not participate during the class. Surprisingly, observation and survey showed that all the students liked to ask questions.

However, when the problem was stated during the pretest, students were able to ask neither meaningful nor in–depth questions, and some students were not able to ask any question at all. Interestingly enough, students who asked one or did not ask any question at all during the pretest did ask more questions during the final test after repeatedly submitting entry questions during the organic chemistry course. The final grade from the chemistry course strongly correlated with the number of questions asked by students on the final test; the more they learned during the course, the more in–depth questions they asked on the final test. (See **Figure 2**, p. 171). There was no statistically significant difference between males and females in the number of questions asked during the pretest and the final test.

Although the post–course survey showed that both male and female students liked to ask questions, about 60% of all students preferred to ask questions outside the classroom. Some students felt uncomfortable asking questions in class; they were shy or were afraid to say something wrong. Others implied that they were unprepared and tried to escape attention during the class. Some students said that they did not like to ask questions during class because, as one indicated, "I am not sure what the teacher wants me to ask. I am sometimes shy to ask questions in class. I do not like to take up a lot of class time. I need time to see if I can figure it out on my own. I do not like holding the class back. I feel that I am bothering someone. I feel like I am wasting everyone else's time."

Student surveys confirmed that the *Blackboard* Discussion Board was the best way to ask questions, such as "For determining the rate in an SN2 reaction both number of alkyl groups and size of alkyl groups matters, but which matters more? If you were comparing rates of one reaction with very few alkyl groups but they were big and another with more alkyl groups but much smaller ones, which would be faster? Is it size or numbers that matters more?" Through asking the type of questions cited above, learners gained a deeper understanding of the subject.

Conclusion

The classroom research showed that good students asked more questions and that the more they learned the more questions they asked. Learning does not involve only the time spent in the classroom; hours spent in the classroom are only part of the real work of learning. There were significant positive changes in grades when students were asking entry questions before the class. In addition, after reading the current lecture material and finding out what they did not know, learners were better prepared for the class participation.

Students believe that asking entry questions before class is a good way to check their own understanding of the material. Some of the significant benefits of asking questions before the class are: (1) developing critical thinking, (2) extending teaching time, (3) developing interest and curiosity, (4) giving a chance for all the students to ask the questions with no limitation because of size of the class, and (5) preparing and motivating students to become actively involved in class. The most important is the students' feeling that by asking questions they gain a deeper understanding of the subject.

Most students like to ask more questions online using *Blackboard* software. This way faculty and students were able to communicate easily with one another. Furthermore, the program gave them a chance to participate without voicing out in class, and some students felt more comfortable doing that.

When we learn, we start by developing an interest in new material, and we ask a lot of questions. We should let the learners figure out what they do not know so that they will be motivated to find out more. Students' ability to ask questions will ensure their success as lifelong learners in the 21st Century.

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Biography

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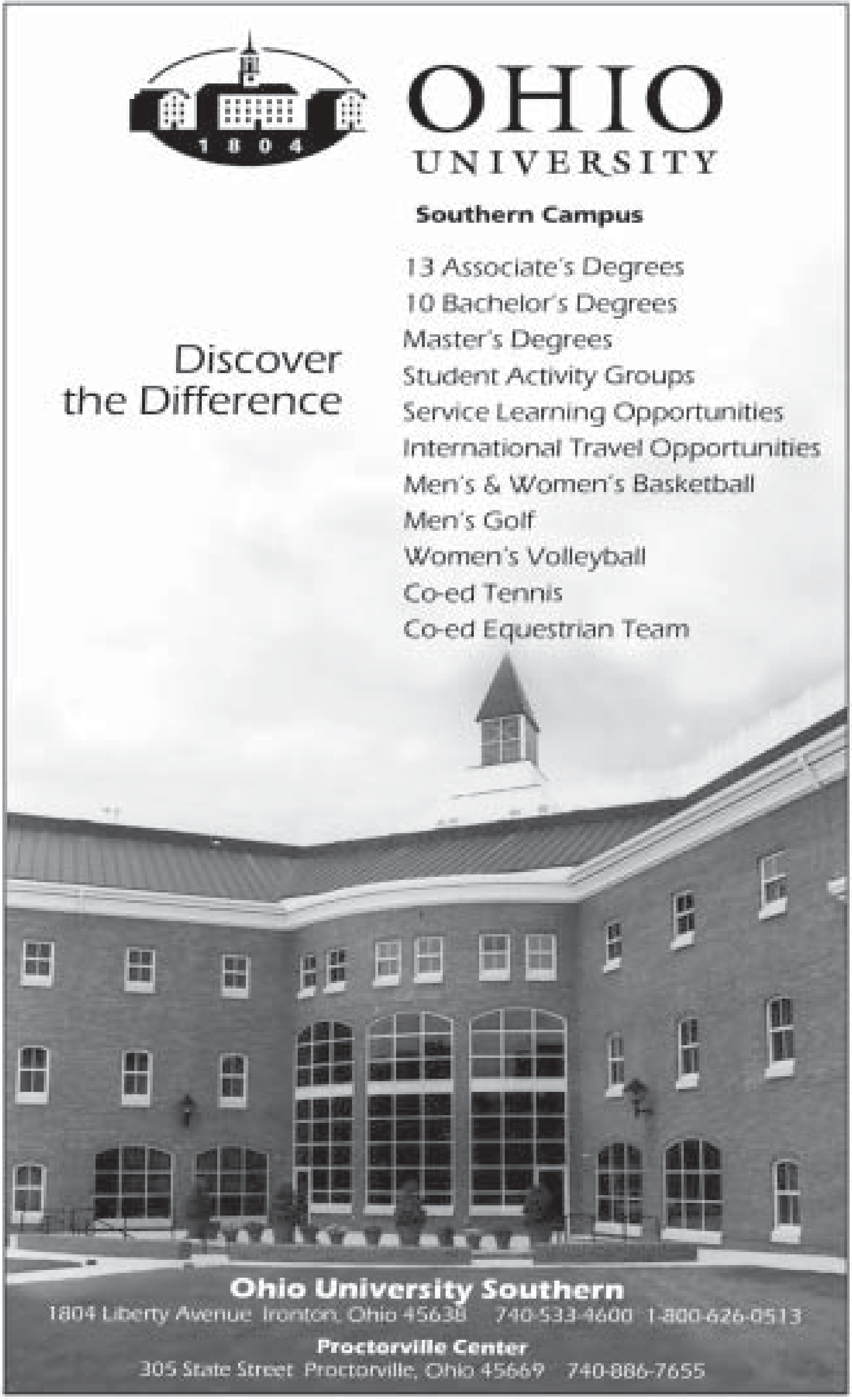
Regional Campuses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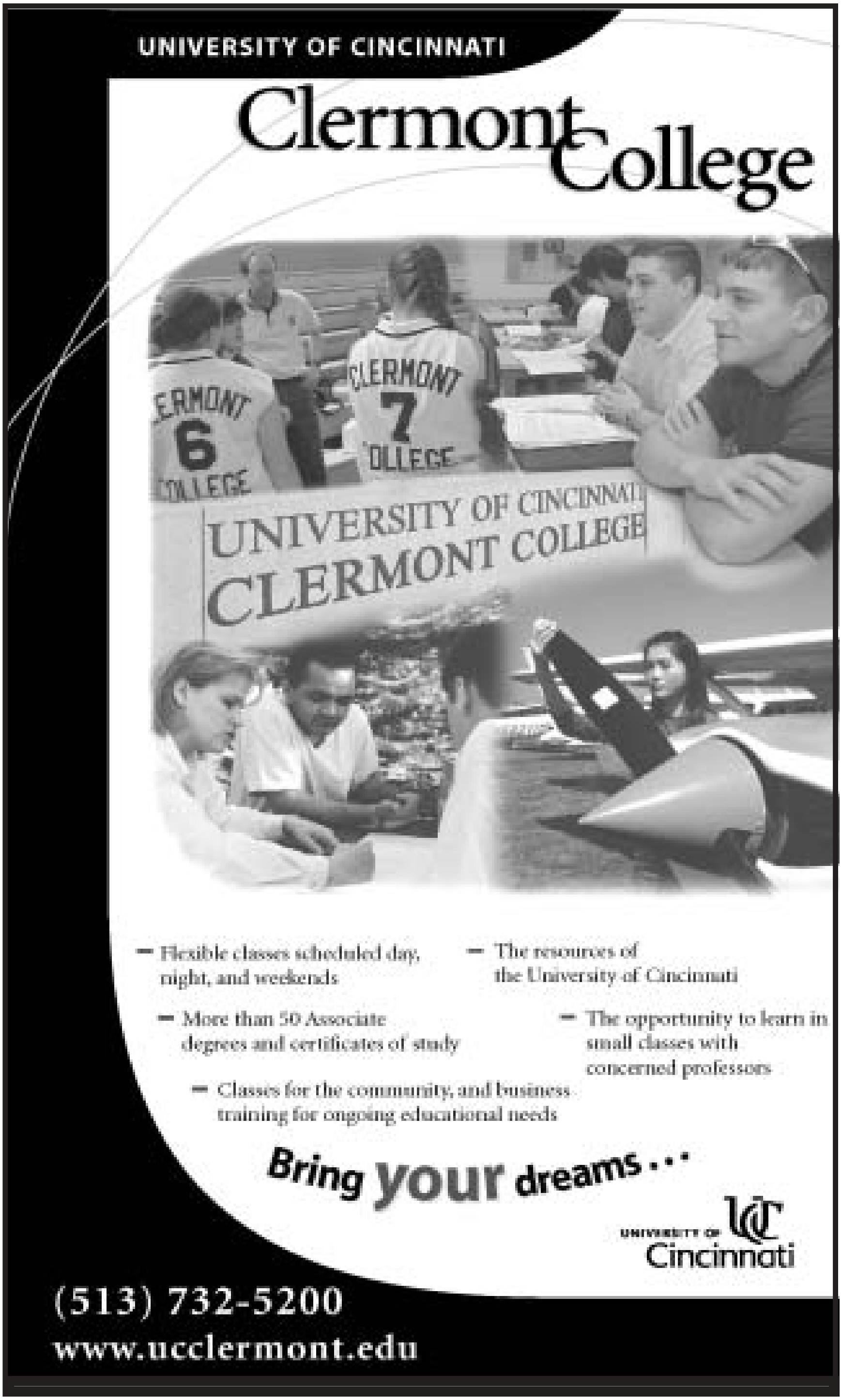
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