CTE NOTEBOOK

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Reinert CTE Mission Statement
The mission of the Paul C. Reinert, S.J. Center for Teaching Excellence is to support Saint Louis University faculty and graduate students. To fulfill this mission the Center:

• Helps faculty and graduate students find their own directions, meaning and pedagogical style in the context of Jesuit traditions of education.

• Develops a community of scholars who encourage and challenge each other through mutual inspiration, mentoring and renewal.

• Supports faculty and graduate students in the development of skills and knowledge of pedagogical approaches using technology and other teaching innovations.

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Lessons Learned by a NOP (aka Novice Online Professor)

Karen A. Myers, Ph.D., Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Ed.

"Of course you may enroll in my hybrid class," I cheerfully said to students, thrilled that they wanted to take one of my summer graduate courses. "No need to cap enrollment," I thought. I would have plenty of time to read their assignments and discussion board postings. After all, it was summer. And then the proverbial brick hit me between the eyes. I believe it was during the first discussion board question that it occurred to me just how much reading this was going to be, not only for me but for all the students as well. Now don't get me wrong; I like a hefty well-constructed answer as much as the next professor. But a little more organization and few more "rules of the road" on my part would have been helpful.

This summer, as I completed my first year as a faculty member at Saint Louis University, I decided to teach two hybrid courses: Organization and Administration in Higher Education and Disability in Higher Education and Society (the latter of which I developed and offered as an experimental course). We met face-to-face in the classroom for the first few weeks, then completed the classes via WebCT. I felt prepared for this hybrid venture by teaching a 3-week online seminar for my professional organization and by completing the 7-week Competency Assessment for Distributed Education (CADE) online course offered by JesuitNet the previous semester. Armed with course modules, numerous

readings, multiple assignments, and a plethora of discussion topics, I approached my summer classes with enthusiasm.

Although my students (a total of 38) did quite well in the courses, their instructor, a novice to distributed learning, discovered several issues that she will indeed address, change, omit, and/or enhance the next time around. In hopes that others may benefit from my mistakes, I humbly offer my Lessons Learned …

1. Cap enrollment if at all possible. 15 is a good number; if more, you may need to require fewer assignments or limit the number of words students may write.

2. Provide clear expectations of when you (the professor) will respond to questions, provide feedback, grade assignments, etc. For example, "I will respond to your questions via WebCT or email within 36 hours of their receipt." (Some students tend to think you are online with them at 2:54 a.m. and will certainly respond within the hour.)

3. Provide specific rules for online posting:

a. Minimum and maximum number of words for written assignments and responses posted to the Discussion Board,

b. How the responses will look (e.g., student's name and topic in subject line; bullet point responses; references from chapter required; specific size and font required, etc.)

c. Timelines for discussion board postings, including specific days and times for discussions and postings (e.g., All groups read case study by 11 p.m. 6/1/06; group members discuss case study by 11 p.m. 6/3/06; one member of each group reports to main discussion board by 6 p.m. 6/4/06; etc.

4. If class does not begin with a face-to-face session, build community between instructor and students and among students at the beginning by providing a personal introduction of yourself and possibly include a photo or a streaming video. There is some debate about the appropriateness of using student photos. You may want to give students the option of submitting a photo of themselves or something else (e.g., their pets, a vacation snapshot, etc.).

5. Divide class members into small groups for discussions. Only those students in the group have access to their group's discussion. Add yourself (instructor) to each group so that you may "listen in" to discussions.

6. Use "fishbowl" reporting. Each small group discusses the assigned topic; one person from each

group reports out on the main discussion board; the reporters discuss their responses with one another while the rest of the students "watch" and "listen in" – thus, the "fishbowl".

7.	Provide sufficient time for readings.

8.	Use rubrics for evaluating and grading online discussions and course assignments. (You can do a Google search for sample rubrics.)

9.	Utilize Universal Instructional Design (UID) principles, providing equitable access for all students. For example, use and require a readable, user-friendly font (at least 14 pt. sans serif, high contrast) for all print; post syllabus online prior to the beginning of class; post outlines for each session prior to that session; post assignment rubrics prior to the assignment date; post chapter outlines, readings, Power Point presentations, book critiques, articles, etc. online allowing access for all students. Continually ask yourself, "Is my class UID friendly?"

10.	Remember to evaluate your class. If your department does not have online evaluation forms, you will need to send hard copies in the mail and hope that the students return them.

And, last but not least, ask instructors who have taught online courses for their Lessons Learned. There is a wealth of knowledge waiting to be shared.

Finally! An Easy-to-Use Internet

Sandy Gambill, Program Director for Learning Technologies

As the web continues to evolve, we're seeing a whole new group of applications lumped under the term "Web 2.0." I use the term to refer to easy-to-use technologies that are focused on helping the average user create or organize content. If you're sharing photographs online, or posting customer reviews on Amazon, you're already using some of these technologies. Your students are definitely using them in the social networking sites Facebook and MySpace. In this column, I'll identify some of these new Web 2.0 technologies that might be useful in your teaching. I'll be exploring specific Web 2.0 technologies in more depth in upcoming columns and in our new monthly electronic newsletter.

The Tool: Ajax Write

Purpose: Ajax Write is a free online word processor that lets you create new files that you can save in the document (.doc) rich text (.rtf) or pdf format. It will also open and edit files from most standard word processing programs, including Word Perfect and Microsoft Works. Since it's web based, Ajax Write works with both Macintosh, and Windows, but only

with the Firefox browser.

Why I Like It: There are many more complicated online word processors out there, but I love Ajax because it doesn't require registration and there's nothing to install on your computer. I haven't tested this, but the developers also say it will work on a dial-up connection.

Teaching Application: Try it when a student sends you a Word Perfect or Works file that you can't open, or when you'd like to create a pdf file, but don't have Adobe Acrobat.

How to Access It: Go to http://www.ajax13.com/en/ajaxwrite/, and click on US Launch.

The Tool: Connotea

Purpose: Connotea is an online citation reference manager. You can keep your citations private, share them with a group, or set up a list that a group can construct together.

Why I Like It: Again, there are more complicated and sophisticated programs, I choose Connotea for simplicity and ease of use.

Teaching Application: Connotea would be useful in the classroom to construct a group bibliography or to help students organize information.

 How to Access It: Go to http://www.connotea.org/ and register for an account.

After you register, you'll be taken through a tutorial that shows you how to add a Connotea button to your browser's tool bar. Then when you are reading an article that you'd like to add to your citation manager, just click the button. In addition to automatically saving the bibliographical information, Connotea, will let you add your own classification tags. It also adds additional information from partner sites such as Pub Med, Science and D-Lib magazine.

The Tool: Standpedia

Purpose: Standpedia is a mapping tool that helps users see multiple sides of controversial issues. You can explore existing maps and add your perspective to them, or create new maps for issues of your choice. Some of the current topics being mapped are the Iraq war, historical reliability of the Bible, and legalization of gambling.

Teaching Application: Standpedia could be an interesting tool to use in helping students construct arguments and looking at all sides of an issue. If you teach in a classroom with a projector, you might consider constructing a new map "live" during a heated classroom discussion.

How to Access: To use Standpedia, register for an account at http://www.standpedia.com/index.php.

PowerPoint Presentations with Narratives

John P. Keithley, Ph.D, CPA, Accounting

How many teachers have heard the following comment from their students? "I know you gave us advance copies of your lecture slides, but I understand the material so much better after you explain it in class!" Perhaps they are trying to stroke your ego, but the real explanation may be that their learning style is more effective when they hear something rather than read it. Also, they pick up subtle variances in emphasis during your classroom discussions or question and answer sessions, and this helps them clarify their understanding of the material.

With this thought in mind, I worked over the summer of 2006 learning how to add narratives to numerous PowerPoint presentations I have used for years in my classes. This project was made possible through a Pedagogy Enhancement Grant from the John Cook School of Business, and I want to especially thank Sandy Gambill of the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence and Ted Stahl of Educational Technology Services for their help with this effort. It was not my intention to eliminate direct student interaction with the instructor, but rather to find ways to expand the amount of involvement by the instructor in a student's coverage of course material. I felt these PowerPoint modules with the addition of dialogue by the instructor might enhance teaching effectiveness in a number of ways.

The following examples are some of the ways I envision these modules being used for instructional purposes:

1. The modules might be used to cover course material which cannot be fully discussed within the classroom due to time constraints. In some situations this might be a review of topics from previous courses or items that are routine in nature, and the instructor would choose this approach so that class time might focus on other, more meaningful issues.

2. In other instances the modules could be used to assist students who have missed a classroom session, or who need to cover the material at a different pace than the manner used within the classroom.

3. Students could use these modules to review specific topics, especially those where the instructor's experience indicates students often have significant difficulty. The modules might be used to provide introductions, or specific instructions for individual assignments, such as cases, term projects, etc.

4. Such modules could also be expanded to

become a significant part of "distance learning" classes.

I have used the first three applications in my classes so far this semester and will expand many of these uses in the future. To illustrate a specific application, my syllabus for Financial Reporting I (ACCT 311) contains an assignment for the review of a corporate annual report which is weighted at approximately 10% of the semester grade. While there are very detailed instructions for this assignment, I have traditionally spent between twenty and thirty minutes of the first class meeting explaining exactly what was involved in this project. Part of this discussion was to emphasize the importance of working on the project from the very beginning of the semester. This fall, on the first day of class, I briefly mentioned the assignment, referenced the page in the syllabus, and posted a narrative PowerPoint module on my web page which explained the project in complete detail. Students were able to listen to my discussion and pick up many of the subtle suggestions which the written syllabus might not communicate as clearly. This seemed to work quite well, and most of the class seems to be off to a good start on the project. In addition, the students will have access to this presentation throughout the semester as they work on this assignment.

While the technical aspects of recording narration are better left for a "hands-on" session, the fundamentals are fairly straight forward. Once you have created a PowerPoint presentation, select the Slide Show category and one of the options is, "Record narration," and you are ready to begin. You will need a good microphone/headset and I used a Logtech USB headset which worked well. I found it very helpful to work from a brief outline as I added narrative to the individual slides. Another issue is the size of the PowerPoint file after you add narration – they become huge! Sandy Gambill suggested using a software package called, "Impatica," which compresses the file to approximately 15% of its original size and creates a reader so students can access the show from an internet source (WebCT, personal web pages, etc.). There is a certain time investment learning a few tricks to adding narration, but the real task is designing presentations and using them effectively for your courses. I have only "scratched the surface," of how these modules might be used, but their potential is exciting.

Martha Brennan

Communication Sciences & Disorders

Most students in my classes are quite accustomed to PowerPoint, causing me to think of different ways to use this tool. I have found that if I present most of the lecture in words on slides, students tend to assume a passive role in the learning environment. Although I have no data from students here, relevant photographs and videos with few words seem to grab attention more easily, and thus may help students make connections and inferences faster and easier, and may even aid in retention. Another benefit of using fewer words on a slide is that this enables more active participation by encouraging note taking. Appropriate embedded links strategically placed in the presentation help engage students. I have also found that posing questions on slides rather than statements seems to generate discussion better. Because PowerPoint is not the novelty it once was, time out from PowerPoint is also a great way to use PowerPoint more effectively.

Check out the Learning Technologies newsletter at:

http://cte.slu.edu/publications.html

Introducing Beth Hill, Ph.D, MSW

Program Director for Teaching

Enhancement

Beth Hill is a new member of the CTE staff. She recently completed her MSW from Washington University after completing fourteen years of teaching speech communication and theatre at Metropolitan Community College in Kansas City, MO. Beth also taught at Missouri State University in Springfield, MO, Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, MO and Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL where she completed her doctorate in speech communication. Prior to teaching Beth performed in educational and professional theatre. Particular areas of pedagogical interest for Beth are teaching as improvisation, developing learning communities, and interdisciplinary teaching. As Program Director of Teaching Enhancement, Beth is available to give support to SLU teaching faculty. If you would like to brainstorm, talk out a teaching problem, get feedback or search for educational resources, please call Beth at 977-2252 or write her at BHill7@slu.edu.

In Memory

This issue is dedicated to the memory of James Dowdy, Ph.D., professor of mathematics. Jim served as an active member of the Center's advisory board and the mentoring committee of the advisory board for over five years. His contribution will be greatly missed.

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