

ON TEACHING

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Engaged Learning in Our Classrooms

“To teach is to engage students in learning.”

Education for Judgment
by C.R. Christensen et al

When teachers are asked about course objectives they often refer immediately to a certain content that needs to be covered in a given class. Ask about teaching Western Civilization, and the first thing a historian is likely to mention is the need to cover 500 years worth of significant events. Students who experience content-centered classes tend to think of them as “information dumps” in which they try to commit to memory a given set of facts.

Both short and long term retention of information in these classes tend to be disappointing. Faced with a comprehensive final, students complain about having to go back and “relearn” material from fifteen weeks ago. An unscientific, informal survey – asking in a 300 level class to indicate by a show

of hands – of how many students could now pass an exam on which they had earned an A as freshmen yielded an overwhelmingly negative response (only 2 of approximately 35 predicted they could). Teachers face a frustrating dilemma: we have specific information our students need to know, but being driven primarily by the need to cover content often leads to learning with a short half-life. This begs the question, if a teacher presents information but students only retain that information fleetingly, has genuine teaching or learning really taken place?

The good news is there are strategies which promote significant learning—learning that results in students having a greater understanding and ability to hold onto and intelli-

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CASE, Carnegie awards Tami Carmichael North Dakota Professor of the Year

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education have named Tami Carmichael, UND’s Director of Humanities and Integrated Studies, the 2008 North Dakota Professor of the Year. The U.S. Professors of the Year program salutes the most outstanding undergraduate instructors in the country—those who excel in teaching and positively influence the lives and careers of students. It is the only national program to recognize excellence in undergraduate teaching and mentoring. Dr. Carmichael was nominated by the Provost’s office and selected from nearly 300 top professors throughout the country. This year, there are winners in 44 states, the District of Columbia and Guam. All of the 2008 U.S. Professors of the Year were honored at a luncheon and awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. in November.

CASE and the Carnegie Foundation have been partners in offering Professors of the Year since 1981. Former UND winners are: Thomas C. Owens, Chemical Engineering (2000) John R. Reid, Geology and Geological Engineering (1996) Daniel Sheridan, English (1995)



Dr. Tami Carmichael and Kara Larson, an alumni of UND’s Integrated Studies Program, attended the awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

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gently use the knowledge we have spent our professional lives trying to share with them. And this spring OID will be focusing on some of these pedagogies of engagement that promote deeper learning and make it more likely that students take what they have learned into future classes and their lives after college.

The first *On Teaching* Seminar of the spring (January 21) will serve as an introduction to some of these engaged pedagogies. And the OID sponsored workshop, "Creating Significant Learning Through Integrated Course Design" (February 5), will offer all interested faculty a chance to work on a specific course they would like to design or redesign to better align learning goals, teaching and learning activities, and feedback and assessment in a way that creates "significant learning" experiences for students. This year's Summer Professorships will also follow the theme of engaged learning.

Many studies affirm that learning correlates strongly with engagement. The more deeply we involve students with the subject matter, with ourselves, and with their fellow students, the more likely they are to achieve at higher levels. Good teaching practice in this regard encourages active learning, student-faculty contact, and cooperation among students. Research shows that if we want to maximize student achievement, especially when they are studying content-dense material and conceptually complex ideas, we

need to keep students active in their learning.

Principles that enhance students' involvement in their learning can be embodied in many ways, ranging from individual exercises that utilize inquiry and problem-based learning to well-designed team projects that ask students to apply their knowledge to real world situations. One teacher may get students more actively involved by structuring cooperative interaction into classes, perhaps having students teach material to one another. Another teacher may use case studies to prompt students to dig below superficial levels of understanding. There are methods and strategies of engagement that fit every course and every learning outcome.

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Our goal is to help you strengthen the quality of learning in your classroom. So please join us in the spring as we explore various ways to better engage our students. You can sign up now for the January lunch seminar and the February course design workshop. Then check the OID website for the summer professorship guidelines, and start thinking about an old or new course you may want to work on this summer. Or consider taking part in all of these activities, so that ideas from the first session can be further developed at the workshop and then finally built into a class through a summer professorship. Details for these events are found in this issue of *On Teaching*. We hope to see you there!

Creating Significant Learning Through Integrated Course Design Workshop

February 5, 2009

9am to noon

River Valley Room

Dee Fink's work on *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* (Jossey-Bass, 2003) describes a method of course design that strives to engage students more fully in their learning. This campus-wide course design workshop is based on Fink's conceptual framework. You don't have to have read the book to participate, and the workshop crosses all disciplines and levels of teaching. You only need to have a course in mind that you want to rework or create. This workshop will be especially helpful to people considering ways that they can take a more student centered, engaged learning approach.

The workshop will be conducted by Dr. Stewart Ross, Founding Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Minnesota State Mankato (honored by the Carnegie Foundation as a CASTL Leadership College.) In the workshop we'll examine the role of course design in teaching and introduce the Integrated Course Design model. Participants will take a "backward design" approach by first identifying what student learning they want the course they are focusing on to accomplish, and then determining what evidence would allow them to see that learning and what instruction will accomplish that outcome.

Register by January 21 for the workshop by emailing oid@und.edu. Participants will need to attend the entire three hour workshop. Registration (where you will pick up information packets for the workshop) and continental breakfast will be available at 8:30.

Summer Instructional Development Professorships: Focus on Engaged Learning

Each year OID and the Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC) award a number of Summer Instructional Development Professorships (SIDP) to faculty working on innovative instructional projects. The Professorships are intended to support instructional development that goes beyond normal course development and has the potential to improve the quality of teaching at UND. This year preference will be given to projects that focus on engaged learning in the classroom and pedagogies of student engagement (described in our lead article this month). Professorships provide a salary stipend of \$3000 and are designed to allow faculty to work full-time on instructional development for four weeks during the summer. Proposals are due by noon **March 2, 2009**. If you are considering submitting a professorship application, attending the February 5 Integrated Course Design Workshop will be a good way to jump start your proposal.

Funding Opportunities for Faculty

OID provides funding for faculty instructional and professional development through both Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC) Grants and Flexible Grants. Please find information on the newly revised guidelines on the OID website. Proposals may be submitted at any time during the academic year and are reviewed on a monthly basis by the FIDC.

Next deadline: **January 5 at noon**

FIDC Teaching-Related Travel Grants support faculty involved in teaching-related projects that require travel to professional conferences or workshops. Because travel funds are limited, projects must be directly related to teaching (pedagogy) in higher education. There are two types of teaching related travel:

- travel to conferences for pedagogical development that can be brought back to specific classes at UND (for example: participating in a teaching-related workshop, where the faculty member will learn new techniques or approaches; or learning about new and innovative ways of teaching one's subject)
- travel to make Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) presentations dealing with research on college level teaching (for example: making a professional presentation on a teaching method you have conducted research on in your classroom at UND)

FIDC Materials/Software/Minor Equipment Purchase Grants are available to faculty wishing to purchase materials or software designed to enhance teaching. Generally speaking, materials can be regarded as teaching-related if they are designed to enhance student learning in specific courses or across programs.

Instructional or professional development projects that fall outside FIDC guidelines may qualify for funding through our Flexible Grant program. For further information, or to discuss ideas and drafts before submitting a final proposal, contact Anne Kelsch at 777-4233 or anne_kelsch@und.nodak.edu

Please note the following corrections to our New Faculty Biographies featured in the last issue of *On Teaching*. We apologize to Dr. Mosher and Dr. Sauer for the mistakes.



Sarah Mosher (Modern and Classical Languages). Sarah earned her Ph.D. at the University of Arizona in 2008. Areas of academic interest for Sarah are in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century French and Francophone literature and film, Critical Theory, Film, Cultural Studies, Colonial and Postcolonial Studies, Women's Studies, Autobiography, travel literature, literature of the Caribbean and Francophone Africa, Islam, and the French-speaking Arab World, Beur or second-generation immigrant literature and culture, and Third World feminism. Sarah taught at the University of Arizona before coming to UND.



Michelle Sauer (English). Though Michelle grew up in Fargo, she attended Purdue, Loyola University, and Washington State University where she earned her Ph.D. in 2000. In August 2000, she joined the faculty at Minot State University where she taught until arriving at UND. Michelle's research area is broadly medieval studies with her special interest being monastic and eremitic texts, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality.

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Upcoming Events & Deadlines

January 5	FIDC Grant Monthly Deadline
January 9	All supporting materials for Outstanding Faculty Awards due (to the Writing Center)
January 21	<i>On Teaching</i> Lunch Seminar: Significant Learning & Strategies of Student Engagement
February 2	FIDC Grant Monthly Deadline
February 5	Campus-wide Workshop: Creating Significant Learning Through Integrated Course Design
March 2	FIDC Summer Instructional Development Professorship Deadline FIDC Grant Monthly Deadline

On Teaching is published six times a year as a service to UND faculty.

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