Friday @ the Center: January 26, 2007

SPU Strengths and Challenge

Jillian Kinzie, a consultant from NSSE (the National Survey of Student Engagement), recently visited SPU and shared with UPEC her observations about our academic program's relative strengths and weaknesses in comparison with other Master's institutions. Areas of strength include our students' participation in community service and service learning, their use of technology, and the university's emphasis on attending campus events. We did substantially better than other Masters institutions especially in the areas of "developing a personal code of values and ethics" and "contributing to the welfare of the community." One of our significant challenges lies in the area of writing: first-year student writing experiences are below or at par with other Master's institutions. For example, our students write fewer medium and long papers than peer schools; only 34 percent of first-year students at SPU frequently write 2 or more drafts (compared to 58 percent at Master's institutions); and our first-year students report that they "make few gains in writing clearly." Other areas of weakness include engagement with diversity and percentage of students working with peers on projects during class. These results come from 2003 data, and we will be able to see if we've made progress in any of these areas when the survey is administered again this spring. The NSSE measures items that reflect students' engagement in learning, based on research into how educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward the right activities. For more information on NSSE and summaries of national results, see http://www.nsse.iub.edu.

Faculty Research Grants Due Feb. 1

SPU has three grant programs designed to support research, scholarship, writing, and creative activity. The **Faculty Research Grant** is open to all applicants, but priority in awards is given to pre-tenured faculty; The **Senior Faculty Grant** requires that the applicant be a tenured faculty member; and the **Lilly SERVE Faculty Grant in Vocation** requires a project that is related to the concept of vocation. All three programs can provide funds for reduced teaching load, travel, equipment, student assistants, and other research-related activities. Applications for all internal SPU grants to support work during the 2007-08 academic year are due **Feb. 1, 2007**. Go to http://www.spu.edu/depts/csfd/scholarshipops.asp for a complete description of each program and application forms.

Teaching Naked

In a recent essay in *The National Teaching & Learning Forum*, Jose Antonio Bowen recommends "teaching naked"—by removing technology from your classroom. He writes, "Flashy PowerPoints with video and synchronous e-conferences are impressive, but the best reason to adopt technology in your courses is to increase and improve your naked, untechnological face-to-face

interactions with students. . . . If your classes are only lectures and exams, you might as well be teaching online. Coming to class has to 'add value'; reducing the technology and increasing human interaction are the best way to create something interactive that cannot be duplicated online." (And, he adds, five minutes of questions at the end of a lecture is not much human interaction.) Bowen lists several ideas to use in medium or large courses (20+ students) to provide content and assessment using technology outside of class: 1) Use Email to create more class time: if you need to reschedule a test or change a reading assignment, email the students rather than taking valuable class time to make announcements; if you forget to mention some key point or example or term, email all your students after class; reinforce key themes or connect them to current events by emailing students drawing their attention to a recent news story, etc.; 2) Move one or more of your class assessments outside of class time (quizzes, group projects, practice exams); 3) Give quizzes or assign problem sets through Blackboard, requiring that they be completed before class; then use class time only to work on problem areas. Read the entire article, with many more suggestions at www.ntlf.com.

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