

Friday @ the Center: September 8, 2006

Retreat! Retreat!

Somehow that sounds like Monty Python's "Run away! Run away!" but it is our time-honored tradition at SPU to inaugurate each academic year with a series of retreats. Faculty will be gathering at beautiful Camp Casey next Monday and Tuesday for our annual all-faculty retreat, at which we will tackle the topic, "How do we as SPU faculty best engage the culture?" Come with your ideas and questions, and be ready for a lively debate, sublime sunsets, a salmon barbeque, and the infamous volleyball game. Schools and departments continue the retreat season throughout the next two weeks. May we all enter the new academic year energized!

The First Day of Class

The first day of class, rather than being a throw-away, is one of the most crucial of the quarter. What happens in class on the first day sets up the classroom culture for the rest of the term. The first day needs 1) to provoke students' interest, 2) to engage them in active learning, and 3) to assure them that you are competent and caring. I don't know about you, but even though I'm a pretty good public speaker, I can't read my syllabus out loud in such a stimulating fashion as to accomplish all of these goals. Here are six strategies for the first day, adapted from Dee Fink, a master of college pedagogy at the University of Oklahoma (see <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/firstday.htm>):

1. **Have the students do something.** Introduce themselves, talk in pairs, conduct a small-group or entire-class discussion, tell you what they already know about the topic, think and write a brief response to a question. Let them know on day one that they will have to do something in this class beyond sit.
2. **Identify the value and importance of the subject.** Students may have no idea why a particular subject is important—how it relates to them (an especially crucial questions for first-year students), to their overall education or major, to their future vocational goals.
3. **Set expectations.** Explain appropriate amounts of study time and homework for the class, distribute or develop together the course policies, find out what the students expect of you and the course.
4. **Establish rapport.** Reveal something about yourself. Share one (appropriate!) personal story to show that you are a human being.
5. **Establish your credibility.** This is tricky. You don't want to come across as an intellectual snob, but you do want to help students feel confident that you know what you are talking about. And take heart—even if you are teaching a course for the first time in a new area, you still know more than most of your students do!
6. **Introduce the subject matter.** Provide some kind of overview of the subject—its component parts and how it relates to other kinds of knowledge. But remember—15 minutes top for pure lecture-mode delivery.

The September Grant Advisor

The September edition of *The Grant Advisor* is now available and can be accessed through on-campus computers at <http://www.grantadvisor.com/tgaplus/>. This monthly newsletter contains 20-25 full program reviews and over 300 listings of grant and fellowship programs, organized into eight academic divisions (fine arts, humanities, sciences, social sciences, education, international, health, and other).

Grant of the Week: The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is accepting applications from investigators from all academic disciplines for projects that study ways to increase understanding of the

causes of suicide and the factors related to suicide risk. The project may also focus on testing treatments or other interventions. The standard research grant of up to \$30,000 per year for a two-year project is for investigators at any academic rank and does not require a previous background in suicide research. Application deadline is Dec. 15, 2006. See http://www.afsp.org/index.cfm?page_id=0535FDA2-FA7D-AAE8-D7A9A6BCFFE3574B.

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Susan

Susan VanZanten Gallagher
Professor of English
Director, Center for Scholarship and Faculty Development