

Friday @ the Center: December 2, 2005

Encouraging Course Evaluation Responses

As I reported at Faculty Senate a few weeks ago, St. Edwards University transformed their student response rate for on-line course evaluations from 35 percent to 90 percent through the simple process of demonstrating to students the significance of their input. University students tend to believe that their input makes no difference. The St. Edwards faculty addressed this by means of including a statement in every syllabus about the role of course evaluations and by taking a few minutes at the beginning of each term to comment on the previous term's evaluations. Similarly, right now, you can encourage your students to complete their evaluations by giving them a concrete example of something you have changed about a class in the past in response to student comments. Or something you have kept in a class because students have found it a helpful learning tool. If the latter, you could ask your students if they agree you should keep this final project, or text, or revision, etc. Students will have until midnight of December 11 to complete their evaluations. **NOTE:** Any technical questions about the on-line process should be addressed to Megan Swanson, mswanson@spu.edu.

Ten Things to Do or You can Kiss Your Class Goodbye

A timely #10 tip from Washington State Carnegie Professor of 2004, Luke Reinsma: "**Your exams should assemble the pieces of your course.** If the days of our courses are like the pieces of a puzzle, which we gradually collect over a quarter, it's not enough to test students on the names of thirty pieces of a puzzle on their final exam. Rather, a good exam will assemble these puzzle pieces into a frame in order to provide students with the 'big picture.' In bureaucratese, our exams need to test for the stated objectives of the course. Put simply, if your course is intended to help students to speak intelligently about, say, a work of modern art, your final exam question should ask them to discuss a work of modern art. In fact, your entire course should be aimed at the bull's eye of these final essay questions."

Graves Award in Humanities

President Eaton recently named Dr. Chris Chaney, assistant professor of English, as the SPU nominee for a Graves Award in the Humanities for 2005, administered at Pomona College under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies. Forty-one institutions in California, Oregon, and Washington are each eligible to submit one nominee for these awards, which are intended to encourage and to reward "outstanding accomplishment in actual teaching in the humanities by younger faculty members." About nine Graves Award winners are selected biennially, and we hope that Chris will be one of them! She is proposing to travel to England to work at the British Library and the National Portrait Gallery on a project called "Self-Portraiture in Art and Literature." President Eaton himself won a Graves Award in his early years as a Whitworth faculty member.

Teaching 101

Any full or part-time faculty member is invited to participate in "Teaching 101," a seminar providing an introduction to teaching, to be held on Saturday, January 7, from 9 until 2. The seminar is especially appropriate for newer teachers, but old hands may find this general overview useful, as well. Topics to be covered include

- What is good teaching?
- Who are your students?
- Facilitating Learning through Course Planning

- Achieving Rapport
- Facilitating Active Learning
- Lecturing and Learning

Contact me to register. There is a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 participants. Lunch and coffee will be provided.

Dreaming of a white Christmas . . .



Susan

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