

Friday @ the Center: September 14, 2007

I'm Hoping . . . for Day of Common Learning Seminars

I'm still looking for faculty to put together a seminar/workshop/panel presentation/discussion for this year's Day of Common Learning on October 24. Our theme, you may remember, is "Living in Hope." Apparently the School of Theology is full of hope, judging from the number of proposals I've received from them, but what about the rest of you? Is there no hope in your discipline? Send ideas and proposals to me by Sept. 24, with the final title and copy for the program due on Sept. 28.

Christie Eppler, from the School of Education, will be leading one seminar on the book, *Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League*, by Ron Suskind, which recounts the true story of Cedric Jennings, a talented black teenager struggling to succeed in one of the worst public high schools in Washington, D.C. Suskind's narrative follows Jennings as he graduates from high school and goes to the brave new world of Brown University. If you'd like to gain some insight into the kinds of struggles faced by some of our students of color, this book and session may be for you. To receive a free copy of the book to read, or even browse, before the seminar, please contact Anna Dufault (adufault@spu.edu).

First Impressions, Part 2

While the syllabus is the first written impression of your course, what actually happens on the first day of class is perhaps even more important. Robert Boice, one of my favorite faculty development gurus, has explored the way that what happens during the first two class periods of a term is crucial for the success of the course. Boice focuses primarily on the vexed issue of "classroom incivilities" (aka rude behavior). Students tend to start a course with reserve, respect, and optimism, even if they are a bit loud and playful on the first day, especially at the beginning of a new year (greeting friends they haven't seen for a while, etc.). But then they wait for the instructor to make the first move. An instructor who is cold, distant, uninvolved, guilt-inducing, threatening, disdainful, or sarcastic (at the expense of students) sets up a destructive pattern of behavior. In order to be able to learn, students need to know right away that the instructor likes them, wants them to succeed, and is willing to help—even if the course material is going to be difficult and will require them to do a lot of work. Students also need to know that the instructor is interested in them as an individual. So think about how you might accomplish these two things on the first day. Next week, we'll talk more about options for the first day of class.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Opportunities

Have you been doing work in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and looking for a venue to share your findings? A great opportunity is the annual Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching—West, to be held at Cal Poly, Pomona, March 21-22, 2008. Proposals for sessions are due on **Sept. 28**. For more information, see http://www.iats.com/conferences/proposals_west2008.html. Even without submitting a proposal, this would be an excellent conference to attend with an eye toward improving one's teaching or beginning work in the Scholarship and Teaching and Learning. Early registration, with a small discount, is available through Oct. 15 at http://www.iats.com/conferences/registration_west2008.html. Lilly Conferences are retreats that combine Scholarship of Teaching and Learning sessions, and major addresses, with lots of opportunities for informal discussion about excellence in college and university teaching and learning. Internationally-known scholars join new and experienced faculty members and administrators to discuss topics such as gender differences in learning, incorporating technology into teaching, encouraging critical thinking, using teaching and student portfolios, implementing group learning, and evaluating teaching.

The students are coming, the students are coming . . .



Susan

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