



# Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

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## From the President

Gary Poole, STLHE President

In this issue, we are treated to a pair of commentaries on the essence of teaching. On the occasion of his receipt of a major award, Albert Adam articulated his perspective on teaching as a fundamental responsibility of professional life. I was struck by the sincerity and passion behind Professor Adam's words.

I was delighted, therefore, when Dan Pratt accepted Ellen Carusetta's invitation to write a response to Professor Adam's article. I find Professor Pratt's views on teaching to be extremely compelling. His book, "Five Perspectives on Teaching in Adult and Higher Education," makes a number of valuable contributions to our understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

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In this issue, then, we have a great match – a senior professor sharing his deeply held perspective on the art of teaching, and one of academia's most thought-provoking commentators on such perspectives. I think you'll find the result of this match well worth the read.

I have said that I was pleased to learn that Dan had accepted Ellen Carusetta's invitation to contribute to this issue. Prior to this, I was delighted that Ellen accepted my invitation to become the editor of the newsletter for the next three issues. Ellen, who is at the University of New Brunswick, is highly regarded nationally for her work in higher education. The newsletter has already begun to benefit from her presence.

And then there is St. John's. STLHE 2001 comes to Memorial University this year and it promises to be a conference to remember. I was chatting recently with a member of the organizing committee in charge of entertainment. I came away thinking that if the conference sessions are as good as the music, we will be in for a marvelous event. When I visited Memorial in September, I was asked to attend a morning get-together of a few of the people working on the conference. The room was packed! Clearly the folks at Memorial have risen to the challenge of providing us with a great experience.

I hope you have made your plans to get to Newfoundland for this year's conference. I look forward to seeing you there.

*Happiness from doing a work is known only by those who do it well*  
– Alain

# Mission of the University Professor: A Testimony

Albert Adam, Full Professor  
Faculty of Pharmacy  
University of Montreal

## Introduction

In past centuries, the University first was an institution with the status of a guild on the fringe of society, in the service of its literary and cultivated aspects, with students coming mostly from privileged circles. Today, the University has become more centralized, not only because of its accessibility but also because of its mission of service towards different social classes. It is an institution for the training of competent and responsible people, a centre of scientific research and creative thought, radiating scientific, cultural and human influences, at both national and international levels.

This mission of the University is inseparable from that of its Professors. What would be a University without its Professors, guardians of the mission of their Alma Mater?

*Teaching, it's not to fill a vase, it's to light a fire* – Montaigne

My definition of the mission of a University Professor comes from my personal experience, my reflections, my reading and, above all, the example of certain Professors under whom I studied.

This definition can be summarized in a single sentence: the transmission of knowledge. This simple and at the same time complex statement merits deeper analysis.

To teach is, of course, an intellectual performance, which consists of transmitting science being done, but also the science we are doing. It is in fact hardly conceivable to teach science which is being done without also being ourselves involved in basic and/or applied research. This dynamic aspect differentiates our teaching from the secondary school and collegial levels. At the university level, we must continuously adapt our teaching to the demands of tomorrow. However, it is difficult to find, on the one hand, adequacy between the teaching that we offer and the real needs of society, and, on the other hand, to respond to the individual needs of our students who hope that their studies will normally lead them to the expected professional career.

However, teaching in University is not only a pursuit of the mind, it is also a humanitarian mission. The real value of university teaching lies not only in the best way of transmitting knowledge but also in the enthusiasm and human warmth that the teacher brings to students to meet their aspiration to know, to open up and to insert themselves in tomorrow's society; thus, we must be at the same time demanding and close to our students, while having at heart their intellectual as well as human progress. Ideally, for our students, our teaching should not only fire up interest but also develop the mind for constructive criticism and keep the imagination creative. As a matter of fact, interest in uniting the rigorousness of precision with the richness of imagination does not have to be

proved any more: *From the scientist to the poet, creative methods are the same* (J. Bernard).

Thus, without being adulated but simply listened to, we will help students to find their own path; we will serve as architects in the development of their personality. The latter are more to promote than to select: *We must be gardeners of talent, rather than eliminators of weeds* (A. Bodson).

This mission of ours is noble, it is grand, it is also difficult to fulfill because of our own limits, but also because of our University, its administration, our society, the presence or absence of clear politics in matters of teaching. However, despite these different constraints, it is important to stay optimistic and strive for excellence.

Unlike other professions, our mission is timeless. The foundations of our teaching remain the same, unchanged since Socrates, the first master known to have founded a school. Our teaching is centred in our will to be efficiently competent in our discipline which implies constant updating of our knowledge, continuous scientific curiosity embodied in honest research where doubt is raised to the level of virtue and where respect of students subsumes the concern of good reception of the transmitted message. Then, making abstract concepts and notions significant to my students, teaching each of them a sense of responsibility and nobleness of the career he or she chooses and even guiding some of them to master and doctorate degrees; these, for me, are the real meaning of my mission.

To carry out our mission requires liberty of thought. Indeed, this mission is incompatible with

political, ideological and economic systems which reduce men to a single dimension. Some disinterest in material needs is also necessary. Without falling into poverty, our priorities should not reside in financial success. The lure of material gain alone and the pure economics praised in some circles are incompatible with our mission, which is to serve our students.

In conclusion, the efficacy and performances of the University depend on those of its teachers. According to the World Bank, highly qualified teachers, strongly motivated and gifted with a professional culture, are the primordial condition for reaching excellence, for justifying the place of a University in society. On the quality of its framework depends the progress of our students in their professional life and beyond, the changes of our society.

## Philosophies of Teaching: Should one size fit all?

*Dan Pratt – Adult & Higher Education  
The University of British Columbia*

Increasingly, faculty at universities and colleges are expected to articulate their philosophy of teaching. Some are motivated by external review; others by curriculum reform; and some may do it as a matter of clarifying to students why they take a particular approach to teaching. In any case, professors are now reflecting on their role and mission as teachers like never before.

Professor Adam's mission

statement (this issue) is an example of such a reflection and I applaud his willingness to 'go public' with his mission statement. He has stated with passion and clarity those attributes that give both direction and purpose to his role as a teacher in pharmacy. For me, what was most notable about his statement was its similarity to many others whom I've studied in North America and Asia. There is a strong sense of commitment to his discipline and yet a respectful concern for his students. In Confucian terms, his teaching mission suggests the dual responsibility of a competent professional and an earnest father. His responsibility includes that of transmitting science and the process of doing science while also helping students find their own path to professional development. At the same time he wants to serve as an architect in the development of their personalities. This is a long honored view of teaching in many parts of the world and one that I would argue must be valued and protected.

I say protected because this view of teaching is under attack – if not directly, certainly indirectly. Across North America and increasingly the world, there is a move within higher education to adopt what is called a 'learning-centered' view of teaching. The view itself is not particularly threatening, either to Professor Adam or to me. It may very well be that Professor Adam and I share enough concern and respect for student learning that our approaches could also fall under the banner of 'learning-centered'. However, the way in which this view of teaching is being promoted and demanded poses something of a threat to alternative views of teaching. In short, it has become the mantra of curricular change and faculty

development across many campuses without clearly articulating how it might compromise other philosophical orientations to teaching.

In part, the argument for this move is a reaction against teacher-centered instruction that dominated much of higher education for the past forty years or more. While I do not argue with the basic goal and implied values of learning-centered instruction, I do resist the rush to adopt any single, dominant view of learning or teaching. Unless we are cautious, I fear we are about to replace one orthodoxy with yet another and promote a 'one size fits all' notion of good teaching.

I am not arguing that any and all views of teaching are equally good or acceptable. That kind of solipsism is neither defensible nor practical. I am, however, arguing for a plurality of views of good teaching. My argument is derived from ten years of research, in five different countries, studying literally hundreds of teachers in adult and higher education. Across a wide range of disciplines, contexts, and cultures, my colleagues and I found a plurality of good teaching, not all of which rest on the same values or principles. Our findings are not unique. They correspond to those of many other researchers around the world, as far back as Fox (1983) in England and as recently as Grubb and Associates (1999) at Berkeley. No single view of learning or teaching dominated what might be called, 'good teaching.' In our research, we documented five different perspectives on teaching, each having the potential to be good teaching. (Pratt and Associates, 1998) Two of those might be called 'learning-centered'; but the others are focused elsewhere.

If we are to acknowledge and respect a plurality of views about good teaching, how might one rationalize or justify a mission statement or philosophy of teaching? How can we avoid both extremes – that of a ‘one size fits all’ versus a solipsism of ‘anything goes’? It seems to me we can base our claims on one or more of the following:

What we believe to be the nature of learning;  
 What we believe to be the desired goals of education/training;  
 What we believe society tells us about the proper role of a teacher.

In our research, most people were able to articulate one or two of these, but not all three. People were most often clear about what they were trying to accomplish, that is, the goals or aims of education. In addition, they often had a sense of ‘what is expected here’, that is, the norms and traditions that they had entered as a member of a discipline, department, or the society and culture from which they came. And some people had strong convictions about the nature of learning, based either on their own experience or on literature related to adult learning. From these three beliefs (more often assumptions), faculty constructed a sense of purpose and role as teacher.

Let me give an example from one of the university professors whom we studied. This individual taught at a large research-based university for many years, rising to the rank of Full Professor in minimum time. When we talked to his students they described him as a gifted researcher, writer and teacher. They said it was his clarity and conviction for his discipline that inspired them. They went on

to describe him as an impassioned advocate for social change. When I watched him teach I saw much of what the students reported. In addition I saw someone that was an engaging lecturer, gifted with language that was expressive and emotional in delivery, with a quick and thorough grasp of relevant literature and theoretical material. It was interesting to be in his classes.

If I infer from what we heard and observed, I would say that he enjoys the stage of teaching. I intentionally say ‘stage’ because learning-centered approaches are sometimes contrasted to something called the ‘sage on the stage.’ In those comparisons it is the ‘sage on the stage’ that represents what we are to move away from, as if this is not learning-centered. There is no question in my mind; this professor was a sage on the stage of teaching.

Of course, there was a downside to this. He was not universally hailed as a marvelous teacher. Some students felt he was too dominant for them. His manner was occasionally abrupt and he tended to use student questions or responses as an excuse to talk still more. There was, in fact, less student discussion in his classes than in many others we observed. But, for the most part, his students were willing recipients of his abundant gift of gab.

Looking at what his students accomplished was impressive. His assignments were imaginative and relevant to the course material and level of students. Many classes required that students work, either collectively or individually, on publishable materials. When doing so, students were admonished to do it his way. He

had a clear and almost absolute sense of what was required for publishing in the best journals, and he demanded no less from the students. As a result, many students published their first articles as a direct result of his classes. Was he learning-centered? I’m not sure. He was, however, clear and certain about the goals of education (for these students) and what that meant for his role as teacher. There was little ambiguity or ambivalence in his explanations of what he was trying to accomplish and what role he played in that pursuit. He didn’t talk much about the nature of learning.

Let me return to an earlier point: I do not take issue with learning-centered approaches to teaching. If teachers are not concerned about learning, what could possibly justify any approach to teaching? However, that is not quite the point. If we say we are learning-centered, what does that mean? Where and how does that position our concern for other things such as the role of context in learning, or the need to maintain standards for entry to practice, or the passion we have for our discipline? What if we seek to change entire social structures more than people’s individual ways of thinking? How should we reconcile different views of learning, the goals of education, or appropriate roles for teachers? Is the popular discourse of ‘learning-centered’ instruction generous enough to include the professor mentioned above?

I don’t know Professor Adam, but for all I know, the example above could be descriptive of his teaching. It isn’t, of course, but it could be. Does Professor Adam’s mission statement fit in the discourse of learning-centered instruction? If he was an

untenured Assistant Professor, would this be a reasonable statement of philosophy for his approach to teaching? I'm not sure, but we need to decide. As I watch our slow but deliberate move toward yet another orthodoxy of 'good teaching' I fear we are building a very narrow view of what counts as effective teaching. My hope is that we will be vigilant and not naively yield to those who believe that there is but one single and viable perspective on good teaching. If we do, we may lose some of our most memorable teachers.

#### REFERENCES

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## The 2001 Alan Blizzard Award Winners Announced

The Alan Blizzard Award is designed to stimulate and reward collaboration in teaching, and to encourage and disseminate scholarship in teaching and learning. The Award is given to collaborative projects that increase the effectiveness of learning. Preference is given to projects that involve active learning and have a potential impact beyond the originating departments or institutions. Created on the occasion of his retirement, the Award honours Alan Blizzard for his significant contribution to the Society as President from 1987 to 1995.

This year, we received 17 applications from 15 Canadian universities. The award is being shared by two collaborative teams; one from McMaster and one from UBC.

Congratulations to Carl Cuneo, Sue Inglis, Christopher Justice, Stephania Miller, James Rice, Sheila Sammon, and Wayne Warry from McMaster for their project: *A Grammar for Inquiry: Linking Goals and Methods in a Collaboratively Taught Social Sciences Inquiry Course*. Also, congratulation go to Steve Alisharan, Barbara Cox, Thomas McCormick, Peter Memetz, Wayne Norman, and Rick Pollay for their project: *Team Teaching and Team Learning in UBC's MBA Core*.

The Award winners will give the Alan Blizzard Plenary at STLHE 2001, to be held this year at Memorial University of Newfoundland, June 13-16, 2001. At the conference banquet, they will be presented with a framed citation in recognition of their accomplishments. In addition, a monograph will be published later this year by McGraw-Hill Ryerson and disseminated by STLHE to all Canadian Universities as well as through the STLHE Web site.

The Alan Blizzard Award is sponsored by McGraw-Hill Ryerson (Higher Education Division) and University Affairs, Canada's higher education magazine.

What follows on pages 6-7 is a brief description of each project.

### STLHE Green Guides

Green Guide No. 1: Teaching Large Classes  
by Allan J. Gedalof

Green Guide No. 2: Active Learning  
by Beverly J. Cameron

Teaching Large Classes and Active Learning are the first two monographs in the STLHE series of Green Guides. Each guide deals with some aspect of teaching and learning in higher education. They are solidly based on relevant research and theory, but the approach is pragmatic and applied. The guides are short, with an emphasis on clear, jargon-free expression, and plentiful examples of how the ideas being discussed relate to real teaching situations faced by Canadian academics. Another feature of the guides is their reasonable price, which is made possible by the generous donation of time by STLHE members in writing, reviewing, editing and distributing, in particular the series editors: Christopher Knapper, Queen's University and Alan Wright, Dalhousie University.

The idea of Green Guides originated with our sister organization on the other side of the world, the Higher Education and Research Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA). HERDSA published its first guide in 1984, and they have now published more than 20 guides on a wide range of topics related to teaching and learning in higher education. HERDSA has very generously allowed us to use their title for the series, and we jointly publish some titles in both Canada and Australia. Other Green Guides are in the works and will be published shortly.

Each guide is \$10.00 Cdn., or \$9.00 US for all orders outside Canada. Unless otherwise requested, all orders will be sent via Canada Post. The shipping/handling rate for individual copies is \$3.00 and \$10.00 for each additional copy. Special shipping rates are available for bulk orders. Arrangements can be made to have shipments sent by courier. ALL ORDERS MUST BE PREPAID. For more information, contact K. Angela Canning of the Dalhousie University bookstore at (902) 494-6704.

# The Alan Blizzard Award 2001

## A Grammar for Inquiry: Linking Goals and Methods in a Collaboratively Taught Social Sciences Inquiry Course

### McMaster University

Carl Cuneo, Sue Inglis, Christopher Justice, Stefania Miller, James Rice, Sheila Sammon, and Wayne Warry

This paper documents the experiences of seven faculty members who have come together from six different social science disciplines at McMaster University to think deeply about the needs of first year students and to act clearly and directly on that thinking through the development and teaching of a first year Inquiry course. Over the past three years, as a collaborative group, we have consistently experimented with the teaching of a course, carefully monitoring results and refining our approach accordingly. Ultimately, we have translated a set of ideals (e.g. developing students who are self-directed and critical in their approach to a topic) into very specific objectives, and then have tailored learning activities in order to achieve those objectives in a way that can be both witnessed and, we believe, reproduced.

This paper also outlines a pedagogical model, a 'grammar' for teaching Inquiry. The grammar, like that of a language, represents an 'ideal' model—the intended learning outcomes and practical objectives for an introductory level course. The model has been abstracted from our collective experience developing and teaching Inquiry 1SS3, a team-developed and team-taught course open to all first year social science students at McMaster University. Extensive time

commitments outside the classroom were required by each instructor as we worked together to develop a common course outline, a core set of readings and a set of workshops for all sections of 1SS3, as well as simultaneously working on appropriate ways of encouraging skill development. At the moment of writing, the courses have undergone three years of development and five iterations of teaching, reflection and tinkering (and are now being adopted by a different group of instructors teaching Inquiry with different substantive content). This explicative analysis supplements findings from our quantitative research designed to assess the effectiveness of these teaching methods on student learning. Interpretive analysis of instructors' and students' experience of the course is consistent with quantitative analysis of pre- and post-questionnaire data and students ratings, in suggesting that for most students the course is successful in accomplishing its learning goals.

Though we believe that Inquiry must be situated in a content area, and that our Inquiry project is inextricably linked to the theory and methods of the social sciences, we believe this Grammar of Inquiry could be widely replicable in a variety of teaching and learning contexts.

#### Contact person for the group:

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The Alan Blizzard Award  
An Award for Collaborative Projects that Improve Student Learning

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# The Alan Blizzard Award 2001

## Team Teaching and Team Learning in UBC's MBA Core

### University of British Columbia

Steve Alisharan, Barbara Cox, Thomas McCormick, Peter Nemetz, Wayne Norman and Rick Pollay

The Core was designed after a two-year study, from 1992 to 1994, of the problems with the MBA programme at UBC and the challenges facing MBA programmes and MBA graduates for the foreseeable future. So far, the core has been run five times, with membership on the team, as well as the team's vision and approach, evolving each year. We believe that the Core is a model for team teaching, not just in business schools, but in any situation where interdisciplinarity and an integrative intellectual perspective are sought.

The core exploits multiple levels of collaborative learning and teaching. The Core team members themselves learn a tremendous amount, about both pedagogy and teamwork, from working with each other for six months before the course begins, and during the actual running and management of the Core. During the Core, the entire team deliver at least two major sessions a week together, and in many other sessions there are at least two professors from the team involved. In addition, the students themselves do a significant amount of collaborative work, with almost half of their Core grade derived

from team projects as well as from classroom and web-forum participation. Even the individual portion of their grade is significantly enhanced by teamwork, since almost all students participate in voluntary study groups.

One of the aims of the Core is to deliver the basic concepts and methods of a wide range of business disciplines. This could be done without team teaching, of course. The Core approach immediately builds on this basic knowledge by helping students understand how it all fits together, and how it can (and must) be integrated to meet decision-making challenges in the real world. The Core experience also provides a unique opportunity to create a powerful culture of leadership, responsibility, teamwork and community within the class; and we are beginning now to see just how much of this culture stays with Core alumni long after graduation. After living the Core, both students and faculty are hard-pressed to understand why any interdisciplinary programme, and in particular any professional programme, would aspire to less.

#### **Contact person for the group:**

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The Alan Blizzard Award

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## STLHE/SAPES2001

*Rediscovering the Art and Science of  
Great Teaching and Learning*

June/juin 13-16, 2001  
Memorial University  
St. John's, Newfoundland

Information:  
[www.mun.ca/stlhe2001](http://www.mun.ca/stlhe2001)

## STLHE Steering Committee

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## Electronic discussion forum

The STLHE electronic mail forum has been active since October 1988 and has over 500 subscribers. The purpose of the forum is to exchange opinions, ideas and experiences of concern to STLHE members and others who are interested in the subject of teaching and learning in higher education. The forum also posts STLHE announcements and news.

To subscribe to the forum, contact the list coordinator, Russ Hunt, by email: [hunt@StThomasU.ca](mailto:hunt@StThomasU.ca), or send the following on-line message to [listserv@unb.ca](mailto:listserv@unb.ca)

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After receiving confirmation of your subscription from the listserv, your correspondence to the Forum should be addressed to [STLHE-L@UNB.CA](mailto:STLHE-L@UNB.CA)

## Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

*Newsletter of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, No. 31, May, 2001*

*Editor:* Ellen Carusetta <[carusett@unb.ca](mailto:carusett@unb.ca)> *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* is published by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE/SAPES). STLHE is a national association of academics interested in the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education. The society sponsors an annual conference, the 3M Teaching Fellowships, an electronic discussion forum, and a variety of other initiatives and publications. The membership is comprised mainly of faculty and teaching and learning resource professionals from post-secondary institutions across Canada and beyond.

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