



# Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

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## So ... what's new?

Gary Poole, *STLHE President*

This very common greeting typically gets a very common reply: "Not much." Yet this reply couldn't be further from the truth as far as STLHE is concerned. In addition to a new president (a development that is particularly relevant to my life) STLHE has a new web-based periodical (Positive Pedagogy) and we are taking a fresh look at the 3M Teaching Fellowship program. The STLHE Steering Committee is also thinking about ways in which the Society can build bridges between research in higher education and teaching practices.

These new directions are being sought in a context of change within the university teaching landscape. For example, the point has been clearly made that we should not be introducing new technology into our teaching without sound pedagogical reasons for doing so. This assertion has led many people who care about university teaching to ponder the ways in which the new technology can be used and how our pedagogy should change to take full advantage of the opportunities this technology provides.

I believe this thinking will lead us to the realization that our teaching will change in fundamental ways over the next few years. I know that I am far from the first person to make such a prediction, and that many before me have foreseen sweeping changes that never materialized. Nevertheless, my discussions with colleagues at my institution and elsewhere have convinced me that the repertoires of those of us in higher education will have to expand in the near future.

Let me try to capture what I mean when I refer to an expanded repertoire. For most of the history of higher education in Canada and much of the world, professors were expected to *profess*. In other words, the main challenge for a university teacher was to

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figure out what to say and how to say it well. Of course, this continues to be a major challenge for us, but now there is more to the story. Now we must know *when* we will say it.

The Mathematics Building at UBC is one of those venerable old structures whose wooden seats display the carved initials of students who have probably entered retirement. Room 100 contains about 150 of these seats in a theatre setting, with large blackboards at the front. At 30 minutes past the hour, a bell rings. Another rings 50 minutes later. For the traditionalist, room 100 is like a favourite blanket. For the modern university teacher, it is like a museum.

I mention room 100 because of those bells. For many years, teachers began talking when the first bell rang, and they stopped when they heard the second. Many would then blow the chalk off their hands and walk out. There was never a thought to *who* should be talking (or, arguably, who should be thinking). Newer paradigms, such as problem-based learning or other collaborative learning strategies, do not provide bell signals for instructors. We must now decide whether we are the appropriate vehicle for the students' discovery of knowledge.

Do we tell them what we know, or do we hope that they will find this out on their own, and thus remember it better? How long do

we let a PBL tutorial struggle before giving the students the benefit of our knowledge? Should we sit back passively and let students espouse opinions that we believe to be illogical? Ill-informed? Damaging?

These questions lead to an even more fundamental one: What does it mean to teach in learner-centred contexts? Many of us are struggling with this question. I am not certain what the answer is, but I do believe that it will lead us to something new. New course designs, new decisions as instructors, and new skills. "Ah yes," I hear you say as you exercise your academically honed habit of health skepticism, "but is there *really* anything new in education? Didn't Socrates do this? Didn't any of us have a prof who knew when to get out of the way and let us take charge of our own learning?" Well, I can only speak for myself, but I didn't. (Socrates' classes were impossible to get into.) I did once have a third-year research methods prof who, on the first day of class, asked us what we wanted to do in the course. We were paralyzed by the question. In fact, we grappled with it for three weeks in a thirteen-week term. Finally, in frustration, we told him to just teach us something ... anything.

We were products of a system that rarely asked students to chart their own courses, and so we were ill-prepared for the professor's invitation. Today's students might

be only slightly better prepared, but we have the tools to make it easier for them to become more autonomous learners. Problem-based learning features sophisticated strategies that go well beyond simply asking students what they want to do in a course. Web-based software allows us to create discussion groups and follow the threads of those discussions. Students can contribute asynchronously.

This, I submit, is new. Is it better? Time and research will tell. Certainly, we have evidence that students learn better when they are more active than passive. Still, we need to learn more about the value of making mistakes, which are inevitable in learner-centred approaches. We believe that students are more motivated to learn when they see the utility of that learning, and problem-based approaches are meant to provide that utility. We have also come to believe that there is value in group work. However, for more learning to take place in groups, students must have the skills to make groups work. Here, then, is another new set of skills we must be able to pass along.

I like room 100. I like the smell of the wood and the chalk. I like the legacy of the initials in the backs of the chairs. I like the way the floor squeaks. But I also like new challenges in my teaching, and there appear to be no shortage of those on the horizon. ♦

## 15 years of 3M Teaching Fellowships

In this issue of the newsletter, we introduce the winners of the 3M Teaching Fellowships for the year 2000. We invite you to get acquainted with this fine group.

One of the great privileges of being president of STLHE is that I get to attend the banquet at Montebello honouring these ten very impressive people. This is a privilege for many reasons. Getting to meet the new "3Mers" is wonderful. Their dedication and skill are inspirational. It is also very gratifying to renew our friendship with Mike Calhoun and Greg Snow, the people who keep the 3M Teaching Fellowship program alive and well at 3M.

This year at Montebello, I commented that the 3M Teaching Fellowship was an award with vision for the past, present, and future. It honours the recipient's past achievements. It celebrates their work in post-secondary teaching by bringing like-minded colleagues together in the present. And it invites the recipients into a larger group of 3M Teaching Fellows who work to enhance teaching in the future. It is this focus across the spectrum of time that makes me so proud to be associated with the award and so appreciative of our partnership with 3M.

Given that the 3M Teaching Fellowship program has been in existence for 15 years, STLHE has decided to engage in a review of the award in terms of its the selection criteria, its recognition at recipients' institutions and across the country, and the post-award activities of 3M Teaching Fellows. Bill Gilsdorf and Andy Farquharson are chairing a committee that is conducting this review. A report will be issued to STLHE and 3M before the end of 2000.

As I am sure you know, we may talk about partnerships between large organizations like STLHE and 3M, but the reality is that we are talking about working relationships between people. I have already mentioned Msrs. Calhoun and Snow from 3M. For STLHE, the 3M program has been administered by Dale Roy from McMaster. In fact, it would not be a stretch to say that, for STLHE, Dale Roy is the 3M program. Working with the support of his staff at McMaster and in consultation with the STLHE Steering Committee, Dale has looked after a myriad of important details for the entire 15 years of the 3M program's existence. In his quiet and very wise way, he has done an outstanding job. Indeed, I would attribute a great deal of the program's success to Dale's attention to these details and his astute judgement.

The 2000 3M cohort will be Dale's finale. After 15 years of exemplary work in the program, he has decided to pass the mantle along to someone else in the Society. Dale has certainly taken his turn! STLHE owes him an enormous debt of gratitude for his work in the 3M program. When the opportunity presents itself, we will want to acknowledge Dale's contribution in a more public forum. For now, let me simply say, "Thank you, Dale!" ♦

### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2001 ALAN BLIZZARD AWARD COMPETITION

The Alan Blizzard Award, named after past Society president Blizzard, was developed to stimulate and reward collaboration in teaching, and to encourage and disseminate the scholarship of teaching. The Award is given to collaborative projects that increase the effectiveness of student learning. The winning team will give the Alan Blizzard Plenary at this year's annual STLHE conference at Memorial University of Newfoundland. They will also receive a framed citation, and a monograph describing their project will be published later in the year by McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Application deadline is January 31, 2001

Submit applications to:

Pat Rogers  
STLHE Past President  
Centre for the Support of Teaching  
York University  
Toronto, Ont. M3J 1P3

Enquiries:

Telephone: 416-736-5754  
E-mail: Pat Rogers at [progers@edu.yorku.ca](mailto:progers@edu.yorku.ca)  
Web: [http://www.umanitoba.ca:80/academic\\_support/uts/stlhe/](http://www.umanitoba.ca:80/academic_support/uts/stlhe/)

# Introducing the Society's 2000 3M Teaching Fellows

## David Berry

Department of Chemistry, University of Victoria

David is an enthusiastic and extremely effective contributor who volunteers much of his spare time to make the most opportunities to educate and enthuse students. As a Laboratory Supervisor in the Department of Chemistry, he is responsible for all aspects of laboratory teaching of inorganic chemistry including overall administration of the undergraduate laboratory program and the hiring and training of all teaching assistants. In 1997, he received the University's highest recognition - the Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence. Dave gives his time, generously and energetically, to the activities of the Learning and Teaching Centre. He is a willing consultant, advisor, and presenter at teaching and learning events as well as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Centre. He works tirelessly to promote the campus-wide program for graduate teaching assistants where he served on the planning group, chaired the sessions for international teaching assistants, and recruited workshop facilitators. He is a stalwart advocate for fairness in employment practices and the necessity for the institution, and departments, to provide timely and appropriate training for all graduate students who teach. As part of a Graduate Studies initiative, he has voluntarily taken on the role of organizing a formal program "Graduate Students as Apprentice Teachers" - a program in which peers will teach peers in an effort to improve undergraduate teaching. Dave also chaired discussion sessions on the practical problems of teaching, contributing to the recent volumes of the Critical Teaching Incidents videotapes which cover such topics as plagiarism, discrimination and harassment. These tapes have raised the profile of teaching around campus and are widely used as a resource for training at many universities throughout the world. David has received several Innovative Teaching Grants, including one to develop his own video entitled, "Critical Safety Incidents", a videotape that graphically translates the lessons learned from a fire in the Chemistry department into lab safety training resource. He maintains an active academic research program in inorganic chemistry through collaborations with faculty at the University of Victoria and with laboratories at other universities. He has also been invited to present at a number of National and International conferences and has published widely in a variety of scientific journals.



## Francis Ping-Hung Chan

Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, University of Western Ontario



Francis is known to countless medical students as an inspiring teacher and a caring and compassionate mentor. He has a unique ability to stimulate and challenge his students in a manner that is both entertaining and instructive. He does a tremendous amount of background preparation for the courses he teaches, and uses all possible avenues, including art and poetry, to draw connections between different ideas. As a result, his student ratings have been consistently in the "excellent" range since 1980. The high standards that he sets in the classroom and his overall contributions to educate have been recognized by the medical students who have awarded him the Hippocratic Council Basic Science Teaching Award on six occasions. In 1999, his outstanding contributions to medical education were recognized by the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry who presented him with the Dean's Award of Excellence in Teaching. In 1996, he was awarded the University of Western Ontario's highest award in teaching, the Edward G. Pleva Award. Francis' interests in teaching and education extend into a whole range of activities for which he is recognized at the local, provincial and national levels. He is one of the founding and continuing members of the annual 2-day faculty development workshop on "Learning How to Teach". He is both a peer consultant and a frequent speaker at workshops sponsored by the

Educational Development Office. He is interested in the training of teaching assistants from other cultures and speaks annually on this topic at the "Orientation Day for International Teaching Assistants". Francis has also played a unique role in education as the University's first Program Officer, International/Exchange Student Affairs where he dedicated his time to improving the quality of students' experiences by making the campus more welcoming to international students and assisting Canadian students in participating actively in educational opportunities around the world. His extensive work on various committees, many in leadership roles, has been instrumental in the introduction of the new medical curriculum at Western. His contribution and hard work at the "grass roots" level facilitated the transition to the new "patient-centered" model. He also plays an active role in devising the new curriculum through his membership on four different subject development groups.





### **Diana Cooper Clark**

Department of English, Atkinson College and Division of Humanities, Arts York University

Diana Cooper Clark's pedagogical initiatives and passion for teaching and learning span 31 years. She is a superb, energetic teacher who lectures with style and verve. She is humorous and confident and inspires students to challenge themselves to achieve. Diana has taught over 150 courses in English and Humanities in both Faculty of Arts and Atkinson College, as well as in the Centre for Academic Writing. Her courses included large lectures, seminars, and even one-on-one tutoring. The Career Days she initiated for students in the English Department have been a great success in highlighting for students and faculty the importance of the study of English. She has won several teaching awards including the Humanities Teaching Award, the York University-Wide Teaching Award for Contract Faculty, and the CASE Canadian Professor of the Year Award. As Chair of the English Department at Atkinson College, she has revised the curriculum, assisted in its transformation into the School of Arts and Letters, has initiated a major student/faculty exchange between York and the University of Cassino, Italy, and is leading faculty in the development of distance and Internet teaching. She is devoted to junior, contract faculty and teaching assistants and

offers on-going assistance and mentoring by offering practical, intellectual, and emotional support. She generously shares her knowledge and experience and routinely makes herself available for consultation. Diana has also worked for the Centre for Support Teaching. She has served on the Centre's Advisory Board, assisted with the Centre's Panel on the Teaching Professional, served on the selection committee for Graduate Teaching Associates, and has been a consultant for the Centre in several capacities. She was a member of the Teaching Committee in the Division of Humanities from 1992, and Chaired the Committee in 1993-1994. She provides countless workshops and seminars on undergraduate teaching for York's Colleges, and offers assistance to many of her colleagues, advising them on pedagogical and professional issues alike. Outside the University, she works with the Toronto and North York Boards of Education, lectures and provides direction for community reading groups affiliated with the National Council of Jewish Women, and has influenced pedagogy across the United States and Canada, as well as abroad. She has published two books and a range of articles. She is a frequent presenter at conferences, has given a number of invited lectures, and offers workshops to colleagues.



### **Holly Devor**

Department of Sociology, University of Victoria

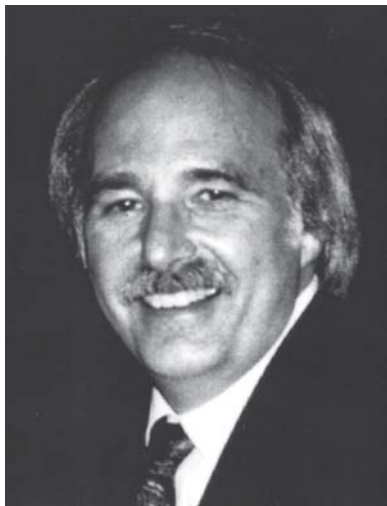
Holly's excellence in teaching is documented by the exceptional student evaluations she consistently receives. She has taught nine different courses, five of which were entirely new courses which she developed. She teaches courses in statistics, gender, sexuality, and feminist theory and for every course, all students have rated her performance highly. Her student ratings have been among the highest in the Department of Sociology for over ten years. She is a highly respected scholar and teacher, and in 1995, she was the recipient of the University of Victoria Alumni Association Award for Excellence in Teaching. Student testimonials note her meticulous preparation, her expectation of high effort, her challenge to think critically, her humane advocacy, her generous gift of extra time to interested students, and her commitment to helping every learner develop. Her achievement as a publishing research scholar is also impressive both in its quantity and widening influence. In addition to having served on the University Senate, she has also served on a host of other departmental and university committees related to teaching and curriculum development. She gives numerous guest lectures in both graduate and undergraduate courses on campus. Holly has along association with the activities of

the Learning and Teaching Centre at the University of Victoria. She has been a member of their Advocacy Committee, a workshop presenter, a participant in panel discussions and a guest speaker on a variety of topics pertaining to improving teaching. In her position as Acting Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, she demonstrated her commitment to T.A. training development through her involvement in workshops and other training opportunities. As a recipient of an Innovative Teaching Grant, she devised the WebForum, a new software program for the classroom that allows instructors to set up and monitor on-line discussion groups and post unlimited course materials using the Internet or e-mail, thereby aiding student confidence and participation levels. She is a strong spokesperson for the value of teaching at the University of Victoria and has a wide and positive impact on the value that her colleagues attach to learning.

**Barry Joe**

Centre for Teaching, Learning and Educational Technology, Brock University

As the Director for the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Educational Technologies, Barry Joe fosters an inviting atmosphere for professional development at Brock University. Some of his accomplishments include reviving the New Faculty Orientation program, establishing an awards program for junior and senior teaching assistants, managing and marketing an internal computer-based training software system for faculty, staff and students, and overseeing the implementation of recommendations for teaching and learning in the University's Planning and Priorities document. His interest in computer-mediated learning environments has given a strong technological direction to the Centre which benefits colleagues across the disciplines. Under Barry's leadership, the Centre has become the hub for efforts to effectively introduce technology as an aid to learning. The Centre offers workshops on WebCT to help faculty use this learning platform. This year, Barry was host and Conference Co-Chair for the annual conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education - perhaps the most significant event for teaching and learning held at Brock since its founding. Barry maintains consistently high student ratings in two different disciplines in two different Faculties. Most of his recent course development work involved conceptualizing, designing and executing a series of courses at the core of the Information Technology stream in Communication Studies. This careful development effort and his enthusiasm for these courses is all the more remarkable, given that he teaches the courses on overload. Barry regularly presents the results of his curriculum development at conferences across Canada. His dedication to teaching and learning, both institutionally and at the personal level, earned him the recognition of his peers when he was named recipient of the Brock University Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1999.

**Allan Jones**

Department of Medicine, University of Calgary

Allan's teaching is much recognized and praised at the University of Calgary. He is ranked at or near the top for his teaching performance in the clinical setting and in the lecture theatre by a large number of students. He is approachable, thoughtful and thorough in all of his dealings with students and is a clinical role model and mentor for many of them. His strength in the classroom is his ability to help students organize information better, by providing a framework for more efficient retention and retrieval of knowledge. The methods he developed and uses in the course that he chairs have now been adopted by many others in the School. By working collaboratively with the student body, he helped to develop a student code of professional conduct, a peer tutor "study buddy" program, a career counseling program, and a formative examination system. He is a regular recipient of teaching awards within the Faculty of Medicine, and he consistently receives letters of teaching excellence in the Internal Medicine Residence Programme. The undergraduate class recognized his teaching achievements by awarding him a gold star for excellence on a yearly basis since 1987. Allan also provides educational

leadership for colleagues in the Department of Medicine. He chaired the Blood System Course from 1989 to 1996 making it the top-rated course in the first two years of a three-year curriculum. Besides being Director of the Clerkship Programme, he was the Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education from 1992 until 1996 and is currently the Associate Dean. Allan helped establish the first three national conferences on faculty development for the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges. At the national level, he has endeavored to improve the assessment systems used by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and has run training workshops for its examiners. Other educational projects include development of outcome based objectives for the graduating medical students at the University of Calgary, development of Faculty of Medicine guidelines for tenure and promotion based on educational achievements, and an external review of the Zamboanga Medical School in the Philippines.



### **Don Kline**

Department of Psychology, University of Calgary

Don Kline is clearly a remarkable classroom instructor who cares about his students and who constantly develops new materials and methods to facilitate their learning.. Paperless exams, a lab in which students use their knowledge to solve a "clinical vision mystery", and interactive web tutorials are just a few of the innovations Don has helped pioneer at the University. Don also developed eight original labs for his Vision course and with a colleague is creating an html-based modular learning package called Sight & Sound for use in perception, audition and vision courses. He is widely recognized for his innovations in curriculum design, the creative use of technology in course and program delivery and for his contributions to the development of a "universal" teaching evaluation instrument and an associate "publication" system for the campus-wide dissemination of course evaluation data for student use in course selection. Don's key role in developing the USRI instrument and publication process won him the Students' Union Ray Alward Memorial Service Award. He has also received the Madden Teaching award, Faculty of Social Sciences Distinguished Teacher Award, the Student's Union Teaching Excellence Award, and the

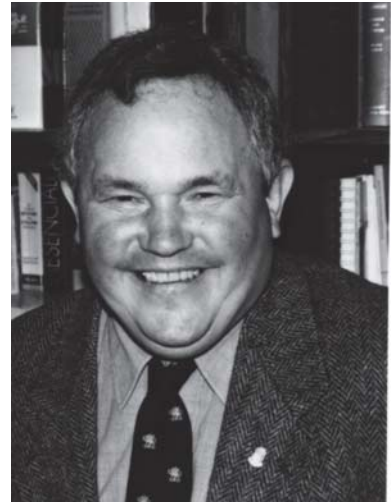
President's Circle Award for Teaching Excellence. Don contributes regularly and with distinction to the broader institutional pursuit of teaching excellence and curriculum development. He established and participated in the design of a Psychology Learning Resource Centre and created the University's first position of Teaching Coordinator to help faculty members respond to the needs and pressures of very high department enrolments. Beyond his own department, he contributes to the advancement of the gerontology curriculum and training across the province as the University's representative to the Alberta Gerontology Consortium. He participates in numerous symposia, workshops and presentation, and helped develop the University's new curriculum model as a member of the Undergraduate Curriculum Redesign Team. His work on this Team was exceptional and recognized by a Presidential Citation for Excellence in Service.

### **Roger Moore**

Department of Romance Languages, St. Thomas University

Roger Moore is an outstanding teacher and leader in teaching and learning development both at St. Thomas University and in the Atlantic Region. While teaching in the smallest department at one of Canada's smallest universities, Roger brings relentless energy and creativity and works continuously to introduce new offerings to strengthen the Spanish curriculum, including live theatre, novel on-line applications, and an innovative conversation course that helps students become more fluent in Spanish while bridging the gap between existing courses in grammar and in composition. He loves innovation, ideas, students, and he loves to teach. He maintains an open door philosophy and encourages students to visit his office when they need help. His overall student ratings scores are substantially above the university average every year and he has won two major teaching awards. In 1996, he was the first-ever winner of the St. Thomas University Excellence in Teaching Award, the University's only teaching prize. He also received the Association of Atlantic Universities

Distinguished Teaching Award, a regional award with some 3,000 eligible faculty members. Roger is currently Chair of the Learning and Teaching Development Committee. The Committee organizes activities such as "teaching conversations", Effective Teaching Institutes, and this year, developed an in-house publication on teaching entitled, Teaching Perspectives. Roger has led a number of workshops on teaching and learning over the years on various topics related to good teaching. His most important contribution in his five-university tour in 1999 at which he led a workshop entitled, "LOTUS: Learning Options for Tomorrow's University Students". He was also invited by colleagues in the graduate faculty of education at the University of New Brunswick to help them with the development of academic and exchange programming with UABJO in Oaxaca, Mexico, and has since become deeply involved in a number of projects involving three-way collaboration with St. Thomas University, the University of New Brunswick, and UABJO. Roger has a strong record with respect to publications on teaching and was co-editor of the Proceedings of the 4th Atlantic Association of Universities Teaching Showcase.



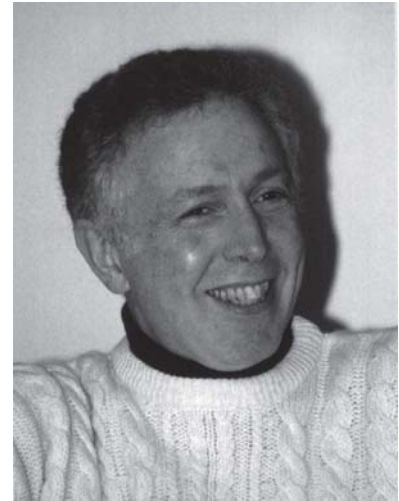


**Morris Orzech**

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Queen's University

Morris is a dedicated teacher who works tirelessly to improve the quality of education for his students and to promote effective teaching among his colleagues. He has led curriculum development efforts in his own department and was among the first at Queen's to use "incomplete notes" for a large first-year linear algebra course, a technique which keeps students involved while freeing them from making copious notes. These interactive notes play a key role in creating independent learners and promoting deep learning. He was also one of the first to introduce a computer-based bulletin board called "MathChat" to promote discussion of mathematical issues dealt with in class among students, teaching assistants and instructors. This pioneering use of the Internet is now used in over 80 different courses at Queen's. He works closely with the Learning Technology Unit, serving on its advisory Board and presenting sessions on incorporating technology into the classroom. He has given presentations at the annual Technology Education Day and acts as an invaluable resource person and instructor for courses and seminars offered by the Instructional Development Centre. He is a member of Queen's Cross-Faculty Teaching Forum, a planning group university-wide events on teaching. In 1995, he

created the Mathematics and Statistics Teaching and Learning Seminar series which regularly brings together highly motivated teachers from the Department, the Faculty of Education, the Instructional Development Centre, and occasionally visitors from other universities and local high schools. He has been a leader at Queen's as well as nationally with respect to a wide variety of educational issues in mathematics. Morris has chaired the Canadian Mathematical Society's Education Committee, a national body for promoting and studying the teaching in mathematics in post-secondary institutions. Over the years, Morris has given numerous talks and workshops about aspects of the teaching of mathematics within the department, in the university and at meetings of the Canadian Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America. He has published two papers in peer-reviewed educational journals, one in PRIMUS, and the other in the International Journal of Academic Development.

**Deborah Schnitzer**

Department of English, University of Winnipeg

Deborah has worked for several years as the originator of a series of workshops, discussion groups, and committees, the most important of these being as Chair of the English Language and Literature Discussion Group that brings together high school teachers, education students, parents and university teachers from several institutions in the province. This committee is an effective voice in shaping the direction of teaching policy and procedures in Language Arts and Literature in Manitoba. The work resulted in several significant activities including a one-day conference on the issue of standards testing and an invitation to meet with the Deputy Minister of Education to discuss the issue. Recently, Deborah co-facilitated the completion of the first offering of a new University course which she developed in Aboriginal Literatures, an initiative that has been crucial to the University's plan to make more courses accessible and relevant to Aboriginal students. Another significant development this year was Deborah's invitation for a partial secondment to the Seven Oaks School Division to assist them in planning their grade 12 English curricula and to work with their teachers and administrators in a range of activities that will promote coherence between high school and university teaching. She has

been involved in telecourse teaching, the designing of transition and retention programs, establishing off-site community-based classrooms and courses, and integrating prior learning assessment and learning outcomes models and well as electronic and distance education delivery systems. At the University of Winnipeg, her classes are always innovative and creative, offering students a chance to expand their learning horizons through interdisciplinary and multimedia projects, while at the same time remaining grounded in the latest critical and scholarly thought. Her warmth, humor and generosity of spirit make her an approachable and effective teacher. As stated by one of her students, "Deborah is a remarkable instructor. She integrates the class and as a result, she has strengthened and refined my learning process. I have never been so engaged in a class before!" Her student ratings consistently place her in the top five percent of all faculty at the University of Winnipeg. Over the last three years, she has developed a successful apprenticeship program for students working with her to improve the use of studio technology, to integrate NET resources, and intensify links with community artists, writers, and activists. In 1993, she won the Clifford J. Robson Award for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Winnipeg.



# Your Teaching Philosophy

**Mike Atkinson**, Educational Development Office, The University of Western Ontario

*"A teacher has two jobs; fill young minds with knowledge, yes, but more important, give those young minds a compass so that the knowledge doesn't go to waste." Principal Jacobs in Mr. Holland's Opus.*

Over the last 10 years, more and more emphasis has been placed on teaching at the university level. This is reflected in everything from official reports such as the 1991 Smith Commission, recent proposals to "certify" instructors (see the November 1999 issue of *University Affairs*), university mission statements and annual reports (see Western's Annual Report at <http://comms.uwo.ca/Report99>), to the increased attention given to teaching in promotion and tenure decisions. In fact, Western was one of the first universities in Canada to require teaching dossiers for P&T decisions, and is one of the few universities in North America that publishes undergraduate course evaluations on the web.

Your teaching dossier is the instructional equivalent of your curriculum vita. It outlines your record of teaching, your goals and accomplishments, involvement in instructional development, and so on. Unlike your CV, the purpose is not to present an exhaustive account of everything you have ever done in or around the classroom, but rather it should present a snapshot of your current teaching activities. One of the most important (and overlooked) sections of anyone's teaching dossier is your statement of pedagogical approach—your teaching philosophy. This does not have to be a long drawn-out treatise—it may only be a few sentences or paragraphs. It may seem odd to place such a reflective statement in the objective record, but such a description gives the reader a context in which to assess the work. It gives you the opportunity to outline your priorities in the teaching environment. This can be particularly helpful to the reader when assessing a file for either P&T purposes, or for a teaching award.

There are numerous approaches one can take when writing your teaching philosophy. Let's examine several of these by looking at the reflective statements from some of Western's top teachers. These should not be considered as mutually exclusive strategies. In fact, many instructors use a variety of these styles.

## Focus on the Purpose of Teaching

In this approach, one presents a general statement about what you see as the "job" of a university

instructor. Principal Jacobs in the opening quote sees two major aspects to the teacher role—transmitting knowledge and providing guidance. You might consider what one should do in the classroom. How does this help the student to develop? Remember to keep your comments focused and to the point.

*"My responsibility as a teacher is to create an environment where students are empowered to think critically and creatively, to learn to seek resources to achieve their learning goals, to develop as self-evaluators, and to receive constructive feedback about their work. I am very cognizant of the need for undergraduate students to acquire specific knowledge while they develop the attitudes and skills that are essential to professional practice in nursing." (Carroll Iwasiw, Nursing, OCUFA Award, 1987)*

*"Teaching in a professional faculty, I am constantly mindful of the need to ensure that the theory I discuss is presented in a context that is meaningful to my students. Most of my students are mature students, for whom relevance of subject matter to their chosen careers is highly valued. Most of my graduate students have had substantial experience as teachers and administrators and are looking for theory to explain, if not outright solve, the problems they encounter in practice." (Greg Dickinson, Education, Pleva Award, 1999)*

*"The primary challenge I have faced is related to the fact that my field—Restoration and eighteenth-century literature—seems remote to most students. My job, I believe, is to make the field come alive for the classes I teach, to demonstrate its centrality in the culture of the late twentieth century, and to instil a love for works that might initially appear intimidating in their neoclassicism or vexing in their satiric density." (Alison Conway, English, Marilyn Robinson Award, 1999)*

*"Teachers provide a catalyst for learning by making information understandable and applicable to students. A teacher must have an intense passion for teaching. An effective teacher also has the will and the ability to show emotion, realizing that genuine emotions not only reveal his or her character, but also are an effective and personal means of communication. And not least, a teacher must know the importance of being humble." (F.P.H. Chan, Anatomy and Cell Biology, Pleva Award, 1996)*

*(continued on page 10)*

## Personal Reflection

Here the individual outlines how and why he or she entered the profession of academia. This may be quite specific (“My father was a customs officer and I became intensely interested in people’s ability to lie”) or very general (“For as long as I can remember, I have been interested in helping students to learn.”) Some questions for you to consider: Why did you become a university instructor? Who were your role models? What attracted you to your specific area of study?

“I chose to study French when I entered university because of an intense interest in language and languages which I developed in my first year of secondary school. In my teaching, I start from the assumption that each student either has a similar fascination already and that my task is to help her follow it further, or that she has the potential to be as fascinated as I am and that my job is to help her develop that enthusiasm for the subject matter.”  
(*Jeff Tennant, French, Marilyn Robinson Award, 1997*)

## Citing Specific Tactics

In this approach, the instructor discusses specific examples of things she or he has done in the classroom. The focus here is not so much on a listing of activities as it is on a demonstration of pedagogical approach.

“Even in large lectures of a few hundred I attempt to invite at least minimal participation, for example, through ‘You Be the Judge’ exercises. In smaller settings I employ debates, role-playing, dialoguing, and mock trials or hearings—techniques that require students to ‘sift through the evidence’, enabling them to adopt various perspectives and make defensible arguments for them.” (*Greg Dickinson*)

“Let me start by saying that I find the term ‘philosophy’ to be rather too pretentious for my approach to teaching. However there are several things that I do in an attempt to be as effective as possible in the time available. I try to be organized so that both the student and I know what is coming, where we have been and what is expected. I also work hard at getting the students involved individually in the lecture and keeping them up to date in the course material. I try to know everyone’s name and I ask lots of questions in class. On a weekly basis, I hand out short problem sets and we hold sessions in which student volunteers present the answers on the board to the rest of the class. The vetting of the

problem sets can be quite time consuming, but I am convinced that it is one of the most effective things that I do.” (*D.H. Hunter, Chemistry, Pleva Award, 1997*)

## The Larger Picture

An instructor may want to set a broad philosophical background for his or her own pedagogical approach. As always, this does not have to be a lengthy discussion of philosophical theory. Rather, the focus is on your own values and beliefs. Such statements tell the reader a great deal about your personal approach to teaching, interaction with students, your choice of instructional format, evaluation, and so on. Think about what values are the most central to your beliefs about education. Equality? Perseverance? Exploration? Whatever you choose, this is a good way to begin your statement of teaching philosophy.

“Teaching is one of the most important of all human activities with a potential for great good or harm. It is far more complex than most people realize and makes large professional and personal demands on the teacher. It repays the teacher’s efforts many times over in terms of the gratification in being a part of the awakening and development of students.” (*W. Wayne Weston, Family Medicine, Pleva Award, 1987; 3M Fellow, 1992*)

“My cognitive machinery is not designed for fine detail work. I think about and understand the world in broad strokes on large canvasses. In the classroom, my emphasis is always on the big picture because that is where I am most fluent. I tend to ‘dig down’ to the necessary level of organizational detail rather than ‘build up’ from all of the component bits and pieces. I am open with my students that they probably command more of the minutiae of the discipline than I—but I also warn them of the speed with which our knowledge of minutiae changes. I try to model a way of being intrigued by, and working with, knowledge rather than being chock-full of it.” (*Tom Haffie, Plant Sciences, Pleva, 1995; 3M Fellow, 1995*)

“My philosophy of teaching is less philosophy and more value-based. However, I do have some basic tenets that I hold dear to my pedagogical practice. My first premise sounds trite but is absolutely critical to what I do in class: I believe I teach students, not a subject. Of course, it is not completely true and I do teach a subject, but I am teaching students about a subject. I have long admired the question, ‘What is worth knowing?’ and try my best to remind myself of that question when I prepare for classes. Its corollary is equally

important, 'How do you go about getting to know what is worth knowing?' For both questions, the issues of HOW to teach and HOW to learn are critical. Teaching to me is about process first, content second." (*Don Morrow, Kinesiology, Pleva Award, 1998; Student Council Excellence Award, 1998*)

"The encounter between teacher and student is an honoured tradition in which one passes on parcels of knowledge to the other. Particularly in the university environment, it involves more than the dissemination of detailed information: the myriad of facts are only kindling used to fuel the desire to imagine, to reason, and to think." (*F.P.H. Chan*)

### Identification of Goals

We have a variety of goals in mind whenever we teach a class. Some of these are broad and quite loosely defined ("I want my students to gain an appreciation for chamber music.") Others may be very specific and could reasonably be thought of as instructional objectives ("By the end of this course, students will be able to identify correctly all of the major structures in the human nervous system and will be able to suggest the likely cause of any neurological disorder when presented with a hypothetical scenario.") Whatever your goals, it is useful to set them out clearly. In this way, you (and your students) can know whether or not the goals have been achieved.

"The following are the general goals I set for myself in the courses I teach"

- To encourage students to make the subject matter their own. In the case of language courses, this involves encouraging them to make use of French every chance they get, both inside and outside the classroom.
- To help students make progress in the learning of their second language by giving them the means to identify and correct their errors.
- To encourage students to challenge their common sense assumptions about language by analyzing it from a rigorous scientific viewpoint.
- To help students, through the study of sociolinguistics, to recognize sources of social and ethnic prejudice in beliefs people have about language and about differences between groups of people based on their language and use of language.
- To establish with students a cordial relationship between learner and teacher based on mutual respect rather than one based on authority.
- To be available to students for assistance with their work when they need it. To this end I encourage students to make an appointment to see me if they are unable to come by during my regularly scheduled office hours." (*Jeff Tennant*)

Although each individual mentioned in this article takes a different approach to instruction, there is an enormous degree of consistency in the philosophies of award-winning teachers. All are deeply concerned about their students, how they should be challenged in the classroom and invited to be critical thinkers. All are mindful of the need to make learning accessible and enjoyable. If there is one quality that links these instructors, it is passion – a passion for their subject area and for the satisfaction of being able to "pass on parcels of knowledge" to others.

For more information on Teaching Dossiers in general or on writing a statement of philosophy in particular, check out the following resources on the web.

#### <http://www.uwo.ca/edo/dossierguide.html>

A Guide to Constructing Your U.W.O. Teaching Dossier. Written by Colin Baird, this guide provides information on the required and optional areas of a teaching dossier for use at U.W.O.

#### <http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/trc/packagegd.html>

The Teaching Portfolio/Dossier. Prepared by the Teaching Resource Centre at the University of Guelph, this site contains some useful information on building a dossier, as well as links to related sites.

#### <http://www.ualberta.ca/~uts/Dossier.html>

Teaching Portfolios and Teaching Dossiers: An Annotated Bibliography. An extensive collection of materials on Teaching Dossiers prepared by the University Teaching Services at the University of Alberta.

#### <http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/facdev/services/dossier.html>

Teaching Dossier Preparation. Written by Gail Riddell at the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth, University of British Columbia, this document outlines the preparation of the Dossier. There are many useful tips here and a list of reference materials. ♦

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### STLHE/SAPES 2001

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

June/juin 13-16, 2001  
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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.

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## Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

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*Editor:* Gary Poole. *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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