



**November 6, 2006**

**Volume 2 Issue 2**

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### General Education –An Update

by Lori Allen

**T**here are so many developments within general education that I chose to write this article from the standpoint of a series of questions.

#### **What are the correct university-wide requirements for my advisees?**

Students are subject to the university requirements in place at the time of their first enrollment at UW-Parkside even if that was 1980. Students may opt to choose the newer requirements, but they cannot pick-and-choose between requirements nor can they move to an older requirement. As applied to general education, most of our students are either subject to the newest version (light green sheet) or the previous version (dark green

sheet). However, I just completed an executive action for a student that started in 1983 and the general education requirements at that time were uniquely different! Including our latest revision, the campus has only revised the program four times.

#### **What are the similarities and differences in the latest two general education programs?**

The new program started in Fall 2005 and was only applied to first-time students because transfer students were accessing the old program through the transfer-credit information system. As of Fall 2006, all new students (including transfers) are under the new program. It is very important to realize that the old program is still active among students who have been here more than 2-years.

Both programs are the same in that “breadth-of-knowledge” is divided into three broad categories: Humanities and the Arts, Social and Behavioral Sciences and Natural Sciences. The old program requires 33 credit hours and the new one requires 36 hours. The Natural Sciences requirement was increased by 3-hours so that 12-credits are required in each of the three broad categories. In the old program, the broad categories are further divided into subgroups as a means to insure that students get a blend of the various disciplines. The new program accomplishes this task by requiring credits from at least three different departments/programs in each of the broad categories.

In terms of the number of courses offered, the old program has 131 (January 2005) and the new program has 101 (Fall 2006). Although this difference may appear

significant, the new program mandates that all courses at the department/program level be offered at least once a year and that one of the offerings be made available in the evening or weekend format every third semester. The old program did not include a frequency of offering stipulation and had courses that were offered infrequently. The new program allows all departments/programs to offer five courses (a sixth course if it fulfills the diversity requirement). In the area of courses that count for both general education and the diversity requirement, the old list had nine courses while the new list has seven. There is an eight course under consideration which already has DV standing. I am hopeful that the Center for Ethnic Studies will be successful at increasing this count in the near future, but I also acknowledge that not all DV courses need to count towards the general education requirement.

The new general education program also comes with learning goals, outcomes and assessment. As a whole, we came together with a common belief that all of our students should be able to communicate, be capable of reasoned judgment and be good citizens (social and personal responsibility). Each of these goals is further defined so that communication is composed of literacy, oral communication, information technology and creative expression. Reasoned judgment includes critical, ethical and scientific thinking as-well-as analytical and aesthetic skills; and social and personal responsibility includes individual accountability, social equality, civic engagement, global perspective and teamwork. Every general education course in the new program fulfills one outcome from each of the three main goals and its department/program submitted rubrics for the learning outcomes. These individual course-based rubrics set the stage for the program assessment which is discussed in more detail below.

### **What is the status of program assessment?**

Last year a subgroup completed a pilot assessment of literacy. The process included the development of a meta-rubric for writing, separate focus groups for instructors and students, and the collection and evaluation of actual student work. The subgroup made numerous recommendations including a project that is now underway involving POLS 100 and GSCI 102 and funded through the student success initiative. This project involves providing a reading/writing specialist for the course who works with students individually to improve their reading and writing. It is hoped that adult specialists imbedded in the course itself will improve student learning both short-term and long-term.

Subcommittees of the General Education Committee are also in the early stages of developing assessment plans for critical thinking and teamwork. The General Education Director is insuring that general education courses are available to students and that course syllabi clearly identify general education goals.

### **What are the benefits of the new program?**

The new program, which was adopted unanimously by the Faculty Senate in Spring 2004, shows students how courses from a variety of disciplines share common general education goals. As an example, instructors of art, business, philosophy and science came together to discuss critical thinking and all agreed that students have similar problems in identifying the main point(s) and reliable sources. The literacy project, mentioned above, is bringing instructors of political science and science together to address issues of student reading and writing. I believe that the common general education goals will set the stage for more uniform evaluation of student performance and thereby enable us to identify effective method(s) to improve that performance.

**What are the limitations to the new program?**

Under the new program, it is possible for a student to fulfill his/her requirements without taking a course in fine arts or without a literature course. It is also possible for a student to navigate the natural sciences without taking any courses traditionally associated with the natural sciences; and it is even possible to complete the social and behavioral sciences coursework without a history or political science course. The frequency of these events is probably similar to those in the previous program who completed their Humanities and Arts requirements using only literature and creative writing or fulfilled their Social and Behavioral Science requirement by using only political science courses.

**Who is involved with general education?**

The Director for General Education also serves as a member of the Committee on Advising and as a co-Director for the First-Year Experience. I also meet regularly with Dean Cress, the Registrar, the

Director of Advising and the Learning Assistance Center. The Director of General Education reports directly to the Provost. The Committee on Teaching and Learning is seeking to add representatives from the First-Year (either the Director for Student Life or the First-Year Coordinator). The General Education Committee actively encourages linkages with the above groups, but also partners with various campus subgroups (SENCER and SoTL). I am looking forward to partnering with the Committee on Assessment.

**Final Word(s)**

I am very pleased to report that we will be making a presentation at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) General Education Conference in February 2007.



**SENCER Regional Conference To Be Held At UW-Parkside**

By Margaret Gename

The University of Wisconsin-Parkside will host the Science Education for the New Civic Engagement and Responsibility (SENCER) Midwest regional symposia on February 9 and 10, 2007.

The opening plenary session Saturday, February 10<sup>th</sup> will be David Burns speaking. David Burns is the founder and principal investigator of SENCER, the NSF –supported national dissemination project. Burns is also executive director of the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement and professor of general

studies at the Harrisburg University of Science and Technology. Prior to establishing the National Center, Burns served as senior policy director for the Association of American Colleges and Universities. During his nine years with AAC&U, he established the CDC-sponsored Program for Health and Higher Education and created the Summer Symposia dedicated to exploring the power that students have to improve the health of college and communities. More information and the daily schedule for the Midwest Regional Symposia will be available next month.

## Featured Teacher: Gary Wood

I find it very difficult to respond to questions about teaching philosophy. Ask teachers about their teaching philosophies, and the answers will likely take the form of lists of things that teachers do in the classroom. They engage students by having in-class discussions. They give weekly quizzes so students get plenty of feedback. They use the POGIL, or the SENCER, or the PLTL, or the ACRONYM model. These are fine techniques, but they do not constitute a philosophy. Other common responses to questions about teaching philosophy are statements of what teachers think about the importance of teaching: "I think that teaching is an important endeavor because [insert philosophy here]." There is nothing wrong with this response except that it seems unnecessary. I think we all pretty much agree that teaching is an important endeavor. No, teaching philosophy is not *what* one thinks about teaching, but *how* one thinks about teaching. I'm not sure I can articulate *how* I think about teaching. Perhaps a couple of stories will help.

I never thought much about teaching as a career until after I was hired for my first real job here in the chemistry department at UW-Parkside. Of course I knew that teaching went along with a faculty position at a university, but I hadn't thought of teaching as the main or most important part of a faculty position. I was coming from seven years of graduate study and postdoctoral work where I had no teaching responsibilities save for a one-semester stint as a teaching assistant. I only began to think about teaching when I was faced with the prospect of having to do it, and the thought scared me.

Between the time I was hired at UW-Parkside and the time I actually began working, I happened to attend a biochemistry conference. On the plane

ride home I sat next to a former high school English teacher who was on her way back from an education conference. It was a long flight and we had a long conversation. After a while I figured out that she was steeped in the world of education and teacher training. I talked about how graduate students in the sciences were given substantial training as researchers but essentially no training as teachers. Eventually I confessed by own apprehension about the fact that in a few weeks I would be thrown into an undergraduate classroom. She looked at me and said, "Ask any group of teachers and they will tell you that they learned to teach only after they started teaching." That made some sense, but I wasn't sure I believed her.

That first class was in the spring semester of 1989. It was Organic Chemistry II, a class I have taught again and again during the past 18 years. I was a little worried. You see, I wasn't exactly an organic chemistry expert. I had made extensive use of certain parts of this particular branch of chemistry in my graduate work, but as an undergraduate it was not my favorite thing; in fact, I earned a nice round C in the second semester of organic chemistry. Please don't pass that information on to the people who hired me. When I came here to interview, one of the first people I met was Professor Homer Knight, a founding member of the UW-Parkside Chemistry Department. The first question that he asked me was, "Can you teach organic chemistry?" No kidding. You see, not only did I sort of bumble through the course when I took it as an undergraduate, but my degrees are in biochemistry, and chemists hold a somewhat dim view of biochemists. From the point of view of real chemists, we are only masquerading. I am sure that the members of the chemistry department thought they were going out on a limb

hiring a biochemist to teach organic chemistry. They probably were. I was excited about starting a new job and teaching the course, but it was the same excitement one feels when standing on the high-dive.

Faced with the reality of teaching a course that I was not very comfortable with and coming in with practically no classroom experience, I did what that English teacher on the airplane said I would do. I figured it out. It wasn't all smooth sailing, of course, but I believe that my initial lack of comfort with the subject matter was a good thing. It made me keenly aware of the topics that were likely to be difficult and confusing for students. And because the thought processes I used to understand these topics myself were fresh in my mind, it helped me come up with creative ways of explaining them to students. I think it also gave me a kind of empathy. "You don't understand nucleophilic aromatic substitution? I feel your pain." I also found support at the Teaching Center, which was located in the space that currently houses the Advising Center. As a new faculty member I was a regular attendee at the Center's brown bag discussions. The topic was never chemistry, but that didn't matter. I picked up hints and tips and insights from people who were expert teachers.

I learned another good lesson from a fellow graduate student named Fred Schendel. Chemistry came easily to Fred. He was a natural. He was also a terrific Sheepshead player. Both of these points are important to this story. One day Fred and I were studying with two other students. We were trying to figure out how a particular chemical reaction worked. Specific chemical reactions often have arcane names that are supposed to describe what happens during the reaction, but the names often fall short of accomplishing anything like that. The

other two students and I were arguing about the name of the reaction. Fred looked at us as if we were stupid children and said, "It doesn't matter what it's called, what matters is how it works!" With that simple statement Fred brought the rest of us into his world. He was telling us to forget about the words, names and symbols and to simply think about molecules. That's why Fred was a natural. Molecules were a natural part of his thinking. To the rest of us molecules were still letters on a page. This seems obvious now, but I think it is something that our students struggle with. We, as professionals in our chosen fields, have invented all kinds of metaphors to act as stand-ins for the real thing. We use these metaphors to teach students and think that we are very clever in doing so. But we often neglect, I believe, to explain this to the students and they get stuck in the mud of the metaphor. If we are not explicit about what we are doing, they might stay stuck. Fred had shed the metaphors long before the rest of us. That is what made him a good chemist and Sheepshead player. He didn't have to think very hard about chemistry and could use the extra energy for more important things.

Teaching philosophy? I'm still not sure. I keep what works and discard what doesn't, I try to help students fly above the forest and not stay stuck in the metaphors, and I never make the mistake of thinking that my class or my field is the most important thing in the world.



## Fall Mini-Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

By Theresa Castor

On October 13<sup>th</sup>, a group of faculty gathered together to welcome Lisa Kornetsky and Renee Meyers and to discuss the increasing importance of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in UW-System professional and instructional development. Lisa Kornetsky is the Director of the Office of Professional and Instructional Development; Renee Meyers is the Coordinator of the UW-System Leadership Site for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Renee and Lisa provided an overview of various UW-System teaching and learning related initiatives, including: Faculty College, the Wisconsin Teaching Fellows and Scholars Programs; SoTL in the Disciplines Project; Lesson Study (initiated at UW-La Crosse); and, *Teaching Forum* (a peer-reviewed online UW-System publication). The Carnegie Foundation also recently designated the UW-System as the coordinating institution for its initiative on System-wide collaborations on the Scholarship of Teaching as Learning. As the coordinating institution, the UW-System will work with the City University of New York, Miami Dade Colleges, the University of

Colorado System, and the University of North Carolina System on the development of SoTL initiatives. For more information of UW-System and Leadership Site initiatives, faculty are encouraged to visit their websites (<http://www.uwsa.edu/opid/> and <http://www4.uwm.edu/LeadershipSite/>).

The mini-conference also featured the SoTL work of UWP faculty members Fran Kavenik, Jonathan Shailor, Joy Wolf, and Theresa Castor. Fran discussed her experiences in the first inaugural year of the Wisconsin Scholars Program. Jonathan provided an overview of UW-Parkside's SoTL initiative, the Critical Thinking Project. Joy described the use of different questioning techniques in a geography class as part of the Critical Thinking Project. Theresa discussed her involvement in the SoTL in the Disciplines project in which she worked with four other UW-System communication faculty members to study student metaphors of effective and ineffective learning. The conference concluded with informal discussion of researching teaching and learning.

## Upcoming Events

### **How Does Race Enter the Classroom? A special Wednesday Brown Bag, Nov. 8, 12-1:30p.m., in The Galbraith Room.**

The idea for this special Wednesday Brown Bag emerged from a discussion of a master's thesis written by a recent Parkside graduate. Excerpts of his thesis entitled "The experience of African American male students at a predominately white institution" will be given to participants to read as well as a recent Chronicle article on the subject. Facilitators for the event will be Farida Khan and Jonathan Shailor. Faculty participants will include Simon Akindes (Teacher Education), Bob Canary (English),

Carmel Ruffolo (Biological Sciences), Ed Schmitt (History), and Zhemin (Jamie) Wang (Business). This event is co-presented by the Center for Ethnic Studies and the Teaching and Learning Center

### **Lana Rakow: Evaluating Teaching as if Learning Mattered: Nov. 10, 2-3:30 p.m.**

This session on assessment of teaching and learning is intended to stimulate our thinking about why evaluations of teaching are conducted and what is missing from even good evaluation practices. In addition to talking about some of the current best practices in teaching evaluation and their

shortcomings, we will consider how assessment of student learning promises to shift our thinking about teaching and what we value and evaluate. Participants will be invited to consider the implications of these issues for our own systems of assessment and evaluation. Lana will address formative and summative evaluations, placing them in the larger context of teaching and learning in relation to advising and assessment of student learning.

Lana is currently a professor of communication and women's studies and the Director of the Center for Community Engagement at the University of North Dakota. She served as UW-Parkside's Communication Department chair and Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies until 1994. During her visit she will also be involved with campus initiatives related to external evaluation for the Communication Department, Plan 2008, and the Center for Community Partnerships.

### **CRCA Presents E.Coli and Weightlessness!**

Two top Parkside researchers will be speaking about their research on Nov 17 from 3-5 PM in Galbraith room: Paul Mohazzabi, and John Skalbeck. The topics will be:

#### **Paul Mohazzabi: Are you really weightless when you are weightless?**

Abstract: The conditions under which we "feel" weightless are outlined. These conditions that are inappropriately referred to as weightlessness, zero gravity, or microgravity are examined and the physical principles behind them are explained. The level of presentation is simple enough to be comprehensible to all audiences regardless of their physics background.

#### **John Skalbeck: Characterization of Escherichia coli in Beach Sands Relative to Sediment Size and Hydrologic Factors**

Abstract: To better understand the relationship between Escherichia coli in sediments, beach hydrology and recreational water quality, ground water and sand samples were collected from three Lake Michigan beaches. Mean grain size and sediment uniformity accounted for variation in E. coli density with fine

sand of uniform grain size having the highest E. coli content. This information may be considered in beach management decisions to aid in reducing fecal indicator bacteria in beach sands hence reducing beach advisories.

### **English as a Second Language: Supporting Our Students Brown Bag: Monday, Nov. 20, 12-1 p.m.**

Chris Zanowski and Chris Tutlewski, will lead this brown bag session which will serve as a discussion point for information about English as a Second Language programs. We will look at curricular models from several universities as a first step towards enabling our English as a Second Language students to acquire the skills necessary to meet their academic, professional, social, and personal goals. The effort is to help advance UW-Ps reputation for excellence and its image as a multicultural learning community.

### **Focus of Phyllis Holman-Weisbard Visit Is Women's Studies and Plagiarism**

**Friday, Dec. 1, 1:00 – 2:30/3:00 – 4:30**

Phyllis Holman Weisbard, the UW System Women's Studies Librarian will present at two campus-wide concurrent events:

- Current Women's Studies topics
- Strategies for thwarting plagiarism

For more information visit her webpages:

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/>

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/plag.htm>

### **Pathway to Publication: Parkside Faculty Discuss Their First Book Publications**

**Friday, Dec. 8, 3:00 – 5:00**

Please join us to celebrate the first publications of Katherine Gregory, Oko Elechi and Leo Zaibert. They will discuss their accomplishment in terms of:

- How does the book inform their teaching?
- How did teaching inform the book?
- How did they balance teaching with writing/editing a book + service and family?

It will be a great way to culminate this semester's series of T&LC events.

## UW-PARKSIDE

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### TLC HOURS

Mon. through Fri.,  
8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

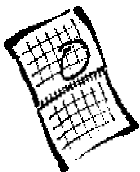


## TLC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Nov. 6, 12-1: SoTL Meeting
- Nov. 8, noon: How Does Race Enter the Classroom? Brown Bag – Special Wednesday Brown Bag in The Galbraith Room
- Nov. 10, noon: Conference Planning/SENCER
- Nov. 10, 2:00-3:30 p.m. Lana Rakow: Evaluating Teaching as if Learning Mattered
- Nov. 20, 12-1: English as a Second Language: Supporting Our Students Brown Bag/Chris Zanowski and Chris Tutlewski
- Dec. 1, 1-2:30: Phyllis Holman Weisbard: Women's Studies Topics
- Dec. 1, 3-4:30: Phyllis Holman Weisbard: Addressing Plagiarism
- Dec. 8, 3-5 p.m.: Pathway To Publication

## Schedule of Upcoming Teaching/Learning Events

- ⇒ **Nov. 8-10:** Increasing Enrollment and Retention via Technology: Discover the Critical Link/Boulder, CO
- ⇒ **Nov. 9-11:** Faculty Work in New Academy: Emerging Challenges, Evolving Roles/Chicago, IL-AAC&U
- ⇒ **Nov. 9-12:** International Society for Scholarship of Teaching & Learning: Making a Greater Difference: Connecting to Transformational Agendas/Washington D.C. (ISSOTL)
- ⇒ **Nov. 17-18:** Quinnipiac University's 1<sup>st</sup> National Conference on Writing as Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines/Hamden, CT
- ⇒ **Feb. 5-6, 2007:** Texas Computer Education Association's Educational Technology Research Symposium/Austin, TX
- ⇒ **Mar. 1-3, 2007:** General Education & Assessment: Engaging Critical Questions, Fostering Critical Learning/Miami, FL
- ⇒ **Mar. 4-7, 2007:** Innovations Conference of the League for Innovation/New Orleans, LA
- ⇒ **Mar. 7-10, 2007:** The Chair Academy's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference-Celebrating the Diversity of Leadership/Jacksonville, FL
- ⇒ **Mar. 11-13, 2007:** Southern Regional Faculty and Instructional Development Consortium/Chattanooga, TN
- ⇒ **Mar. 16-17, 2007:** 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Lilly-West Conference-Blueprints for Student Learning/Cal Poly Pomona
- ⇒ **Mar. 26-30, 2007:** SITE 2007, 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education/San Antonio, TX-AACE
- ⇒ **Apr. 2-5, 2007:** 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference on College Teaching and Learning/Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
- ⇒ **Apr. 3-4, 2007:** Perdue University's Teaching and Learning with Technology Conference/West Lafayette, IN
- ⇒ **May 20-23, 2007:** International Conference on Teaching & Leadership/Austin, Texas
- ⇒ **Oct. 23-26, 2007:** EDUCAUSE 2007 Annual Conference/Seattle Washington



## OPID CALENDAR 2006/07

- ❖ Nov. 8: Department Chairs Workshop/ UW-Stevens Point
- ❖ Nov. 10: Conference Development Grants-Proposals for Spring 2007 due
- ❖ Nov. 17: 2007-08 Wisconsin Teaching Fellows and Wisconsin Teaching Scholars Nominations due
- ❖ Jan. 31, 2007: Conference Development Grants- Final Reports for Fall 2006 due