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**A Participant's Perspective of the
Midwest Regional SENCER Meeting**

by Vera Kolb

The Midwest Regional SENCER Conference was held at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The conference had 57 registered participants, who traveled from parts of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa to attend. A welcome from the Parkside sponsors opened the conference, which then continued with a series of breakout sessions. Topics ranged from *SENCER 101* and *The Nuts and Bolts of SENCER* to building partnerships with community agencies, from reports on new SENCER courses and models to the application of visual learning and computer technology in SENCER teaching. Posters that detailed

participant projects and courses were on display throughout the conference.

SENCER 101, given by Theo Koupelis, was an extremely useful and engaging session, both for novices and the already SENCERized. Theo addressed the key issues, such as why faculty and members of the administration should become involved in SENCER and that the learning in the class must be personally meaningful to students. He talked about various SENCER model courses that are available on the SENCER website, and on the various ways they can be used. Theo pointed out that the SENCER courses are not the watered-down science courses. Instead, they generate enthusiasm and foster long-term learning in science, goals that are usually difficult to achieve in the traditional science courses. Additionally, SENCER courses naturally provide the reflection component in learning. Theo also facilitated the session on *The Nuts and Bolts of SENCER*. He presented many practical points, notably how to mitigate administrative obstacles in gaining approval of SENCER courses, which are typically interdisciplinary.

The afternoon of lectures and break-out sessions was followed by the reception, dinner, and lively discussion among participants. Many ideas were exchanged, the stories of teaching successes and failures were shared, and new directions for SENCER were envisaged.

The second day of the conference featured David Burns as the keynote speaker. David began by discussing the time and process between the "impulse" to act on the SENCER idea to the actual production of the SENCER course. He vividly recounted his first, (pre)SENCER impulse, to teach students about AIDS, all

the way to the course implementation, which he financed by using a part of grant overhead. His initial insight was that the enlightenment of the students about science is best achieved if they start from the things that interest them. However, sometimes more than simply that interest is needed to ensure the sustainability of the course. David's experience was that one needs to link the SENCER course with another, required course.

David also provided the broad vision of the SENCER approach to education. He contrasted the interdisciplinary teaching mode with the pre-disciplinary one. The latter is preferred, since the students are not yet indoctrinated with the dogmas of the disciplines. He did warn the teachers against the indoctrination of any sort. The early focus on non-majors, David demonstrated, does increase the interest of students in science.

Much useful material about SENCER was presented in a very clear and organized way. The following points were especially valuable: (1) students need knowledge that they can transfer to problem solving, (2) teachers need to find out what happened to people who dropped/failed the course, (3) the assessment needs to be constant, (4) the best programs are those in which students are involved, (5) the test-taking skills are not the same as learning skills, (6) students should do research, (7) teachers should learn about their students and what they know, possibly by having them write short biosketches.

More sessions followed after lunch, each one interesting and engaging in its own way. If there was one thing wrong with the conference, it would be that it was too short!

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Partnering for Student Success in the First Year-The OPID Spring Conference

by Theresa Castor

On March 23-24, instructors, staff, administrators, and students from around the University of Wisconsin System will gather in Madison for the annual Office of Professional and Instructional Development Spring conference. This year's conference will focus on "learning about learning" in the first year experience

The main goal of the conference is to facilitate sharing across the UW system of programs and research on first year students. There are three more specific goals related to the conference. First, the conference has a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning component in considering and sharing questions related to student learning and evidence to address those questions. Second, the conference will

encourage attendees to take an institutional perspective in understanding student learning. Finally, the conference will involve students in talking about their own learning experiences.

Each campus has been requested to send a campus team consisting of individuals from a range of backgrounds such as faculty, student services staff, institutional researchers, first year coordinators, students, administrators, etc. The teams are to use the conference as an opportunity to develop project ideas for understanding learning among first year students. Following the conference, teams will be invited to submit research project proposals on learning among first year students.

The Committee on Teaching and Learning has assembled UW-Parkside's team to focus of literacy and diversity in the first year experience. This topic area was chosen to intersect with many of the current major initiatives on campus such as General Education Reform, the First Year Experience, the Equity Scorecard and Plan 2008. The team consists of: Lori Allen, Theresa Castor, Mary Louise Edwards, Fran Kavenik, Kelly McFatter, Teresa Reinders, Helen Rosenberg, Jim Robinson, Theron Snell, Christine Tutlewski (unable to attend conference), and Chris Zanowsky (team leader).

The OPID Spring conference will also feature presentations, panels and workshops related to the first year experience. The following UW-Parkside members will also be presenting at the conference:

- Lori Allen, Fran Kavenik, Theron Snell: "General Education and Literacy:

Reaching and Teaching First-Year Students"

- Theresa Castor: "Metaphors for Teaching and Learning in the First Year Experience"
- Helen Rosenberg, Teresa Reinders, Anne Statham: "Improving Student Success and Retention in Introduction to Sociology"

Sandy Moats and Carol Tebben will also be attending the conference as UW-Parkside's current Wisconsin Teaching Fellow and Scholar, respectively. The OPID Spring conference is the last meeting of the academic year for Teaching Fellows and Scholars and provides an opportunity for individuals in this group to share their projects.

If you are interested in learning more about the progress of the campus team initiative on literacy and diversity in the first year experience, please contact Jim Robinson.

Astronomy Education Research-Getting the Message Out

By Dave Bruning

How do you let astronomy faculty know about the wealth of research in astronomy education from K to 16? First, you create a new journal just for astronomy education researchers that includes peer-reviewed articles as well as resources and opinion columns. Second, you create an annotated bibliography that guides faculty looking to inform their educational practices and forms a starting place for new researchers as they initiate research projects or action research in their classrooms.

In 2000, I was part of a small group of astronomers and astronomy education researchers who started the electronic journal *Astronomy Education Review* (AER, <http://aer.noao.edu>). This is now the largest and most authoritative journal for

astronomy education research. One of my continuing jobs, first as a member of the Editorial Board and now as part of the Advisory Council, is to help promote the journal. New graduates know about the astrophysical literature because they have studied it throughout graduate school. But few know about the education journal, so proselytizing is an on-going task. Most new graduates seem eager to hear the message as they prepare to teach their first courses.

One benefit of having an education journal is the ability to publish in it. I have published five papers in AER that otherwise would have had homes in journals less-read by astronomy educators or, worse, would not have been published.

Does your discipline have an education journal? If not, the officers of your professional society may be receptive to starting one. In the case of physics, the education journal became part of an existing journal; it became an extra issue several times a year and later was integrated into the journal. In astronomy, we decided to create a separate journal with help from two professional societies.

Prior to the starting of AER, articles on astronomy education were spread through dozens of journals. Some were education journals, others in the psychology and cognition literature, and others were buried in science journals. Most astronomy education researchers have come to the field from astronomy, not from education, and so much of this literature, and the journals themselves, were unknown to the investigators.

To help alleviate this problem, a small group of us decided to start an annotated bibliography to help researchers. Annotated bibliographies, for those of us in disciplines where such things are uncommon, are bibliography lists that contain a mini-summary of the article. In our case, we describe the grade level, sample size, and topical nature of the study. Our bibliography contains only education research papers in astronomy; astronomy education resources are being developed at a separate Web site called AstronomyCenter.org.

The history of SABER, our bibliography, dates back to 2001 when I ran into the dynamo known as Gina Brissenden. Gina at the time was the education assistant for the American Astronomical Society (AAS, our professional organization); she has a way of getting you to do something without you realizing you had volunteered. So I left the meeting owing her a couple of dozen annotations for what was to become SABER.

Gina started the original Web site for SABER at UW-Madison with assistance

from the AAS and the Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium. I created the database and Gina and I provided most of the annotations. After a couple of years, Gina left Madison to join the astronomy education team at the Univ. of Arizona, arguably the most important astronomy education research center in the world. We moved SABER to Parkside, where it continues to reside today. Janelle Bailey, now at the Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas, and I have expanded the database, with some help from graduate students as they work on their dissertations. Janelle now teaches a research course for education graduate students and they are starting to add to the database as well.

SABER wouldn't be useful if it weren't searchable. The original search engine was pretty simple because the database was small. As the database grows, we are adding features to help researchers zero in on the literature. A complete list is also available in PDF format, which is useful to graduate students.

While we originally envisioned SABER as a resource for researchers, it turns out that the major research groups already know about this literature. After all, they are the ones helping to build the database. Instead, we are finding SABER to be most useful to faculty who want to inform their educational practices and those wanting to perform action research in their classroom to improve their teaching methods.

I suspect that most disciplines do not have comparable databases for their educational research literature. But starting one isn't hard, especially if one can create a group of interested parties to help. I encourage you to visit the SABER Web site (<http://astronomy.uwp.edu/saber/>), and then talk to colleagues in your discipline about starting a similar resource.



How Does Race Enter the Classroom?

By Faye Akindes

The semester's student session was a provocative continuation of last semester's faculty forum addressing the same question: "How does race enter the UW-Parkside classroom?" Students shared narratives then created small discussion groups with faculty, staff and visiting administrators from UW-Madison and the University of Southern California. There was also a healthy representation of students in attendance.

Thank you to faculty organizer Jonathan Shailor and his conflict analysis & resolution / communication students: Jasmine Harris and Cassia Maurer (moderators) and participants: Deanna Abbott, Tiffany Donald, Thea Jackson, Nadia Keller, Kyle Mcgahee, Dorian Moore, and Amanda Stipek.

Narratives addressed such experiences as racial segregation in the classroom, the consequences of unresolved racially charged discussions, and the revelation of a white student who learned she carries "a knapsack of white privileges."

Questions that emerged from the student forum:

- * What is the role and responsibility of professors in addressing race?
- * When and to what extent should a professor intervene in contested discussions of race and racism?
- * How can we strengthen the cultural competency of all professors at UW-Parkside?

To continue the Brown Bag discussion of the faculty and student forums there will be a follow-up: UW-Parkside's Annual Mini-Conference on Teaching and Learning. It will occur on the last class day of the academic year: Friday, May 4, 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm in the Galbraith Room. The mini-conference will end with a buffet dinner in Main Place.

Guest speaker: Dr. Camille Henderson.

Hope to see you there.

Fay Akindes, Jim Robinson
Center for Ethnic Studies, Teaching & Learning Center

Campus-Wide Conversation About Course Evaluations

By Anne Statham

The Committee on Teaching and Learning in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Center is organizing several events this semester to generate a campus-wide conversation about course evaluations. To start the process committee members are talking with each Department Chair and academic Program Director and are asking what instrument they are using, what they like about it, what they would like to improve, and how they use the information. The Committee will use this information to plan a Brown Bag to be held Monday, March 19 on this topic. Seven Department Chairs

will discuss the course evaluations they are using, what they learn from them, and what other information they would like to obtain from the instruments. A mini-conference the afternoon of Friday, April 6 will give people time to learn more about constructing course evaluations, and join a working group to think about any changes they might wish to make to their current instruments -- and any assistance they may need from the Committee on Teaching and Learning or Center on Teaching and Learning to accomplish their goals.

General Education Update

By Lori Allen

In late February and early March, members of the General Education Committee attended both the First-Year Experience Conference in Dallas and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Conference on General Education in Miami. Our session at the latter on revising and assessing a general education program, with a “workshop” for the participants, was very well received. We returned from AAC&U as this newsletter was going to press, so we will be providing a more detailed, campus-wide report in the near future.

The Committee is also continuing its efforts to develop an assessment plan for the general education goals of critical thinking and teamwork. Department chairs and instructors of general education

courses with those goals are encouraged to attend a Brown Bag on April 11 in the TLC. Work in assessing and improving student literacy, our third goal under scrutiny, is moving forward apace, testing various methods of providing assistance to all students in the areas of reading and writing. We have relationships established this year with American Politics (POLS 100), Science and Pseudoscience (GSCI 102) and have recently begun to plan ways to assist with General Psychology, PSYC 101. Early results from the Nelson Denny Reading Examination show student reading rates to be lower than expected to enable them to do college-level work. These early results will be presented in more detail at the March 23 OPID Conference and at a campus Brown Bag on April 16.

Faculty College Nomination Forms for 2007-2008 Arriving Soon

By Jim Robinson

Sponsored by OPID, Faculty College provides an annual opportunity for UW System faculty and academic staff to unite in concentrated study and discussion aimed at improving undergraduate teaching and learning. It consists of three days of intensive, interdisciplinary seminars on topics related to teaching and learning.

This year it will be held May 29 to June 1 at UW-Richland. The Keynote Address will be:

Taking the Lead on What Matters in College: Liberal Education for the New Global Century
by Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

As OPID describes it:

“... (the) experience of the College enhances collegial interchange on teaching, contributing to a systemwide network of faculty and academic staff committed to educational excellence.”

I found it to be a stimulating and thoughtful experience that gave time for reflection and communication with colleagues. The key is that since it is during the summer afterward you do not return to the office and play catch-up, a situation that can effectively quash many reflections and insights.

I strongly urge you to consider this professional development opportunity. The Faculty College brochure and nomination forms will be out soon. Expect nominations forms to be due in early April.

To learn more visit:
<http://www.uwsa.edu/opid/conf/fc.htm>

Ucoming Events

Mark your calendars for the following dates. You don't want to miss these events that are being sponsored by the Teaching & Learning Center.

Brown Bag on March 19, 2007, from noon until 1 p.m.: **Course Evaluations**

Brown Bag on April 2, 2007, from noon until 1 p.m.: **Clickers** featuring Gary Wood, associate professor, Chemistry Department.

Mini-Conference on April 6, 2007, from 1 until 5 p.m.: **Course Evaluations**

Workshop on April 11, 2007, from noon until 1 p.m.: **Rubrics in the General Education Curriculum** featuring Lori Allen, associate professor, chemistry, and Jim Robinson, director of the Teaching and Learning Center.

Brown Bag on April 16, 2007, from noon until 1 p.m.: **Reading & Writing Across the Curriculum** presented by Fran Kavenik, director of international studies and English professor.

Mini-Conference on May 4, 2007, from 1 until 5 p.m.: **How Does Race Enter the Classroom?** with guest speaker Dr. Camille Henderson. In 1998 she started analyzing race as the focus of her Ph.D at the University of Chicago. She used her doctoral work – an examination of historical attempts to build stable interracial communities – to develop a theoretical model of equitable and sustainable integrated environments. Her focus at the mini-conference will be to explore the ideas generated by the first two brown bag sessions on How Does Race Enter the Classroom.

Important Facts About Your Students

By Mary Louise Edwards

At this time in the semester, please encourage your students to:

- Meet with their Academic Advisor today!
- Priority course registration starts April 9th
- Visit Career Center for Summer Job information

- Study tables with tutors available:
Ranger Hall - M & W, 7p.m.–9p.m.
OMSA - T & R
Tutoring Center - Available by appointment



UW-PARKSIDE

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E-Mail: tlc@uwp.edu

TLC HOURS

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



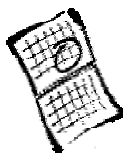
TLC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Teaching and Learning Center/245 Wyllie

- Mar. 19, 12-1 p.m.: Brown Bag-Course Evaluations
- Mar. 20, 12:30-1:30 p.m.: SoTL Meeting
- Apr. 2, 12-1 p.m.: Brown Bag-Clickers
- Apr. 3, 12:30-1:30 p.m.: SoTL Meeting
- Apr. 6, 1-5 p.m.: Mini-Conference: Course Evaluations
- Apr. 11, 12-1 p.m.: Workshop-Rubrics in Gen Ed Curriculum
- Apr. 16, 12-1 p.m.: Brown Bag-Reading & Writing Across the Curriculum
- Apr. 17, 12:30-1:30 p.m.: SoTL Meeting
- Apr. 30, 12-1 p.m.: Brown Bag-A Wiki as a Teaching Tool
- May 1, 12:30-1:30 p.m.: SoTL
- May 4, 1-5 p.m.: Mini-Conference: How Does Race Enter the Classroom?
Featuring Camille Henderson in the **Galbraith Room**

Schedule of Upcoming Teaching/Learning Events

- ⇒ **Mar. 7-10, 2007:** The Chair Academy's 16th 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:** 19th Annual Lilly-West Conference-Blueprints for Student Learning/Cal Poly Pomona
- ⇒ **Mar. 26-30, 2007:** SITE 2007, 18th International Conference of the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education/San Antonio, TX-AAACE
- ⇒ **Apr. 2-5, 2007:** 18th International Conference on College Teaching and Learning/Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
- ⇒ **Apr. 3-4, 2007:** Purdue University's Teaching and Learning with Technology Conference/West Lafayette, IN
- ⇒ **Apr. 13, 2007:** 8th Annual Midwest SoTL Conference/Indiana University South Bend, Indiana
- ⇒ **May 18-20, 2007:** The Teaching Professor Conference: Learning To Teach Across a Career/Atlanta, GA
- ⇒ **May 20-23, 2007:** International Conference on Teaching & Leadership/Austin, Texas
- ⇒ **May 29-June 2, 2007:** National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education/San Francisco, CA
- ⇒ **June 3-7, 2007:** 29th Annual Summer Institute on College Teaching/Williamsburg, VA
- ⇒ **June 13-16, 2007:** Evolving Scholarship/Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- ⇒ **June 18-20, 2007:** Teaching For A Change: A Celebration of Learning/Park City, UT
- ⇒ **June 20-24, 2007:** 2007 Greater Expectations Institute: Campus Leadership for Student Engagement, Inclusion, and Achievement/Burlington, VT
- ⇒ **Oct. 17-19, 2007:** Institutional Research & Accountability in Higher Education/Reno, NV
- ⇒ **Nov. 1-2, 2007:** SoTL Commons Conference/Georgia Southern University



OPID CALENDAR/2006

- ❖ Mar. 15, 2007: Regents Teaching Excellence Awards-Nominations due
- ❖ Mar. 23-24, 2007: OPID Spring Conference for 2007
- ❖ Apr. 13, 2007: Faculty College 2007-Nominations due
- ❖ May 29-Jun 1, 2007: Faculty College 2007 at UW-Richland