Learning to Deal with the Ambiguous

By Worth Weller, CELT Board Member

Another record turnout was established when the 11th Annual Fort Wayne Teaching Conference was held at IPFW earlier this month. With 222 registered participants and a handful of last-minute walk-ins, the Feb. 8 conference was a collaborative effort of Ft. Wayne area colleges and universities, including Huntington University, Indiana Tech, IPFW, Ivy Tech Community College, Manchester College, Taylor University, and the University of St. Francis. The theme of the conference was “Critical Thinking: Analysis and Evaluation.”

Keynote speaker Sharon Hamilton, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at IUPUI, told the group that critical thinking is the fundamental building block of learning. “If you are not thinking critically, you are not really learning,” she said. She praised the content of the conference’s program, which focused on a wide array of disciplines, from nursing to the visual arts. “We tend to think of critical thinking in a little box, as if it only occurs in well-defined areas. But an act seemingly as simple as looking at something requires a critical organization in order to take it all in,” she noted.

“Look at environmental affairs, another topic of the concurrent sessions,” she continued. “Critical thinking does not occur in a vacuum – it occurs in the context in which we live. Our students are going to be the caretakers of the environment, and they have to learn to be able to make wise decisions among a host of competing ideas and less than precise facts,” she observed. “That’s what critical thinking is – learning how to deal with the ambiguous,” Hamilton added.

Linking Advising to Teaching, Learning and Scholarship

Marc Lowenstein, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and a proponent of academically centered advising, will deliver the keynote speech at a half-day teaching conference open to all IPFW faculty and staff, to be held at the Rhinehart Music Center, on Friday, March 28th from 8:30 am – 1:30 pm. Lowenstein’s keynote address at 9:00 am will be followed by 2 hours of concurrent sessions: Documenting Student Learning Outcomes and Scholarship in Advising, led by Irwin Mallin, COM, and Marc Lipman, Arts and Sciences; How to Reward Advising: Models for Chairs and Supervisors, led by Kathleen O’Connell, AVCFA; and Effective Models for Mentoring, led by William Bruening, Philosophy. A hot buffet luncheon will be served by Catablu in the lobby and balcony areas of the RMC, followed by a wrap-up session led by Dr. Lowenstein. Contact Irwin Mallin, 481-6553 or Nancy Leinbach, 481-6348 for more information. Registration is required and will be available at the CELT web site on March 1.

F r i d a y , M a r c h 2 8 , 2 0 0 8
B e S u r e t o M a r k Y o u r C a l e n d a r s !
Enhancing Teaching and Learning Across the Campus-Support for LTLs

This month CELT News talked with Hardin Aasand, Chair, English and Linguistics, Karol Dehr, Associate Director of Writing, and Stevens Amidon, chair of the Composition committee about the department’s professional development activities in support of Limited Term Lecturers. All of the LTLs in the department of English and Linguistics, with few exceptions, teach writing courses such as W131 and W233. There are from 35-50 LTLs and Graduate aides at any given moment, of which 25% might be new hires.

The Fall orientation dinner promotes a climate of openness and community, say Karol and Steve. The week before classes start in August, the Writing Program holds its “annual meeting” of LTLs. It is also the occasion for signing contracts, which is an additional motivation for LTLs to attend beyond the $60 each receives for attending. The LTLs participate in several sessions, in addition to having dinner, which address teaching topics that will interest returning LTLs, as well as administrative matters that may be of greater interest to new LTLs.

Karol organizes PEERs, the Professional English Education Roundtables, and the annual orientation. The PEER addresses teaching topics and practices, and is a voluntary activity which LTLs themselves lead. Recent topics included the new W129 course for freshmen, plagiarism, effective group work, and students with disabilities. Karol and Steve say that the roundtables are not publicized outside of the department, but others are certainly welcome to attend, especially faculty who are making extensive use of writing assignments.

About half of the people applying for an LTL position are asked to take the graduate level C505 Teaching Composition, a 3 credit course, offered in the fall and in the summer. Frequently, the Composition Committee will base the recommendation on the sample syllabus that a candidate presents in the application process. The English department or the Division of Continuing Studies reimburses the tuition for C505 upon completion of the course. In general, the course must be completed before the LTL receives a teaching assignment. Steve and Karol said that most LTLs consider the course a tangible benefit, especially since it helps them earn credit toward a graduate degree.

Another support activity is Steve’s weekly email message to a list he calls “The Usual Suspects”. In it he disseminates administrative information, and teaching topics that open up discussion among the faculty on the list.

A significant component of the department’s professional development program is the teaching portfolio that every LTL assembles in each of the first three years of teaching for IPFW and every 3 years thereafter. The contents of the portfolio have recently changed to reflect a “more holistic, formative approach focused on professional development,” remarked Hardin Aasand, department chair. The portfolios now contain: a statement of how the faculty member is meeting the outcomes of the course or courses taught; copies of syllabi and assignment descriptions; and samples of student work reflecting 3 levels of performance. Karol and Steve meet with the LTL to discuss the portfolio. Karol and Steve have also found that meeting with an LTL during the first semester of teaching is more a way to support the LTL than a classroom observation.

When asked which practice they had found most effective in enhancing teaching, the group cited the organic relationship among the orientation, the PEERs, the C505 course, and the portfolio. Each activity reinforces the others.

In closing, Hardin offered this advice: “Start small. Although we have several people who have been given course releases to do this work, even 2 to 3 faculty who really care about Freshmen can have an impact. We need to pay attention to our LTLs because our students need to have a great experience in their first year.”

by Gail Rathbun
Faculty Spotlight shines on CELT Volunteers

CELT depends heavily on IPFW faculty and on colleagues from regional campuses to deliver high quality professional development events. At this time, the CELT would like to publicly acknowledge the contributions of the individuals listed below, the members of the CELT Advisory Board, and the Teaching Fellows. CELT could not do its work without them. Thanks!

If your name is not on the list, please contact Stephanie Haneline at x16354, and we will be sure to recognize your efforts in a future CELT News.

From the Director...

Despite the snow and cold, semester is gathering momentum.

Moon Heum Cho has now joined CELT as Instructional Consultant/Designer. He will be working this year on special projects in support of online teaching. He is quickly adapting to Indiana and IPFW, and has already demonstrated his skill at making great Korean snacks!

CELT has instituted Walk-in Wednesdays to enable faculty and staff to drop by without an appointment and get questions answered. Several of you have taken advantage of this opportunity, and we hope that more of you will visit as the semester unfolds.

Sam Birk and John Ladd will present “Synergetic Pedagogy: A Tale of Students, Faculty and Multimedia” at Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) at Purdue on Tuesday, March 4, from 3-4 pm. We have 2 spaces in our van if you want to go on that day. We will be leaving at around 8 am and returning around 6 pm.

The DECCO Faculty Support Committee, composed of Sam Birk, CELT, Eric Vitz, Distance Learning, Deb Conklin, Continuing Studies, Ben Gates, History, and Carol Sternberger, Nursing, are working on a collection of short videos in which faculty talk about their favorite online teaching tips. So far, Ben, Sam, Eric, Adam Dirksen, COM, Worth Weller, ENGL, Stella Batagiannis, EDUC, Solomon Isiorho, GEOS, Dina Mansour-Cole, OLS, Cathleen Carosella, ENGL, Rachelle Darabi, ENGL, Ramesh Narang, MCET, and Carrie Stumph, ECON, have contributed to the collection, which will be shared via the CELT web site, and eventually, we hope, on iTunes U. If you want to contribute a 90 second tip, please let me know and we will record it at your convenience.

Stay sane and successful this semester.

-Gail
Upcoming Events for March and April 2008

Conferences
March 4-5, 2008 Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) 2008 at Purdue University, West Lafayette. Theme will focus on students: their learning experiences, social experiences, visual and interactive experiences, and online or virtual experiences. The conference program is at http://www.itap.purdue.edu/tlt/conference/.

March 28, 2008 “Advising as Teaching” Conference at Rhinehart Music Center, IPFW. See page 1 for more information.

August 7-10, 2008 8th MERLOT International Conference, MERLOT: Still Blazing the Trail and Meeting New Challenges in the Digital Age, Minneapolis. For more information see http://mic08.merlot.org.

Workshops on Pedagogy
12 O’clock Scholars Brown Bag Series

Every fourth Monday of the month, 12 - 1 pm in KT 101

March 24: Teaching in Learning Communities with Greg Anderson and Learning Community Faculty

April 28: Advising as Teaching with Irwin Mallin, Communication

Typesetting and Design

Reading Circle: Understanding the Adult Learner
Friday, April 4, 12 - 1:20 pm, KT 119
Facilitators: Julie Hook, General Studies, and Robin Newman, Center for Women and Returning Adults

Faculty Showcase: Using the Quality Matters Rubric to Enhance Online Teaching
Friday, April 11, 12 - 1:15 pm, KT 119
Presenters: Jennifer Caseldine-Bracht, Philosophy, and Lesa Rae Vartanian, Psychology

Faculty Showcase: Success with Service Learning
Friday, April 18, 12 - 1:15 pm, KT 119
Presenters: IPFW Faculty members

Teaching with Technology
Exploring Second Life Basics for Educators
Thursday, March 20, 1 - 3 pm, EDT, KT 178
Webinar produced by Academic Impressions. For detailed information, go to https://www.academicimpressions.com/web_conferences/0308-second-life.php.

Games as Assessments I: Developing digital game-based self-assessment tools
Wednesday, April 2, 12 - 1:15 pm, KT 234 (Multimedia Lab)
Workshop facilitator: Samantha Birk, CELT

Working with Digital Images for the Classroom and the Web, Part I
Friday, April 4, 10 am - 12 pm, KT 234 (Multimedia Lab)
Workshop Instructors: Darlene Miller, and John Ladd, CELT

Games as Assessments II: Developing digital game-based self-assessment tools
Wednesday, April 9, 12 - 1:15 pm, KT 234 (Multimedia Lab)
Workshop facilitators: Samantha Birk, and Raymond Gildner, Geosciences

Working with Digital Images for the Classroom and the Web, Part II
Friday, April 11, 10 am - 12 pm, KT 234 (Multimedia Lab)
Workshop Instructors: Darlene Miller, and John Ladd, CELT

Video Editing from the Desktop
Online workshop begins on Monday, April 14 and will end on Friday, April 25
Workshop Instructors: Darlene Miller, and John Ladd, CELT

Working with Digital Images for the Classroom and the Web, Part III
Friday, April 18, 10 am - 12 pm, KT 234 (Multimedia Lab)
Workshop Instructors: Darlene Miller, and John Ladd, CELT

Don’t Forget! Registration is required for all CELT events. You may register to attend at www.ipfw.edu/celt