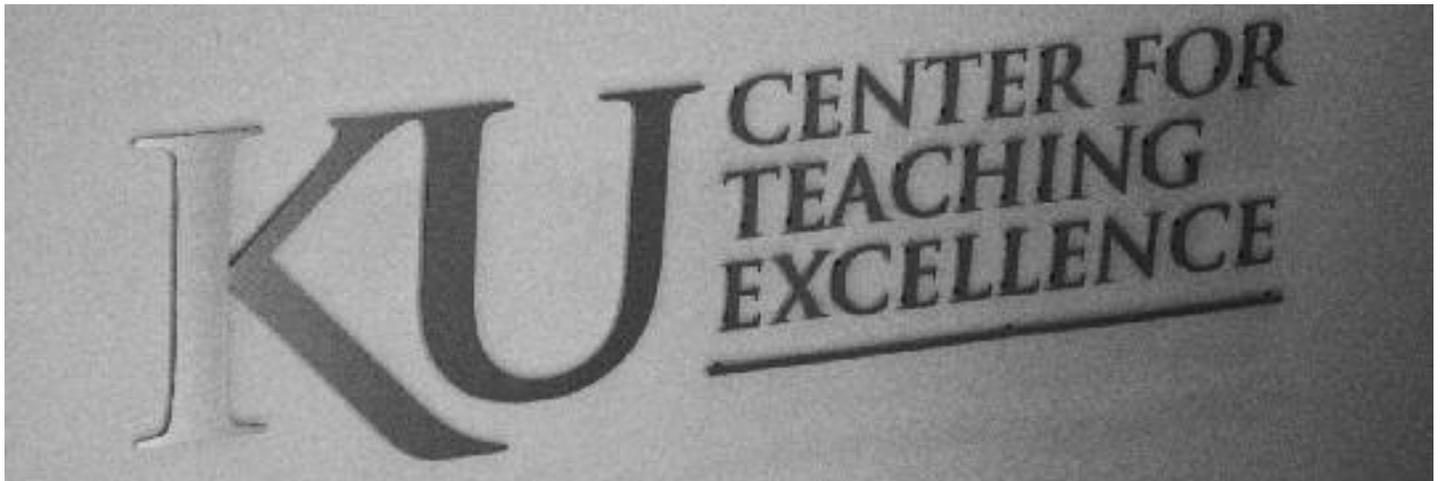


Teaching Matters

News & Information from CTE

Spring 2017

Vol 20, No 2



We've come a long way since 1997

In August 1997, the Center for Teaching Excellence opened its doors. We were housed in three study rooms in Anschutz Science Library. The next year, we moved to new offices in 135 Budig. At our open house, one colleague remarked that we had gone “from the basement to the Ritz!” The central location has allowed us to be an intricate part of campus, in different ways as needs changed.

Here are some CTE milestones from the last 20 years:

1997—Fred Rodriguez named first director. *Teaching Matters* begins publication.

1998—First New GTA Conference held.

1999—First Teaching Summit.

2000—First Best Practices Institute held.

2002—Dan Bernstein becomes director; moves CTE into national scholarship of teaching and learning movement.

2004—E-portfolio gallery opens.

2007—First Faculty Fellows.

2013—Andrea Greenhoot becomes associate director, Ying Xiong first assessment specialist. C21 and teaching post-doc programs begin.

2014—Greenhoot becomes CTE director; Doug Ward named associate director.

2015—First Student Learning Symposium held.

2016—Diversity Scholars begin.

2017—Joshua Potter becomes assessment specialist.

In this issue of *Teaching Matters*, we're reprinting a few of our favorite articles. I hope you enjoy them as much as I have enjoyed being part of CTE since 1997.

—Judy Eddy

In this issue

CTE View—Andrea Greenhoot describes ways to innovate teaching, pp. 2-3.

Perspectives—Dan Bernstein discusses mutual responsibilities for academic performance, pp. 3-4, and how higher education has changed, p. 5.

Innovations—Doug Ward considers evidence-based teaching, pp. 6-7. And a former KU administrator interprets three Bernstein conditionals, p. 7.

End Note—Four defining features of teaching as inquiry, p. 8.

How do we teach outside the box?

Andrea Greenhoot
CTE/Psychology

Recent developments such as new technology, more flexible class scheduling and spaces, and a profusion of research on high-impact teaching practices are making it less daunting to be creative in our teaching. Here are five suggestions for teaching outside the box:

Be imaginative about when, where, and how your class meets.

To illustrate, hybrid courses, in which face-to-face class meeting time is reduced and replaced by additional out-of-class (typically online) time, can accommodate higher student enrollment while simultaneously “shrinking” the classroom during face-to-face time. Instead of one section of 90 students, an instructor could split a class into two sections of 45 to establish a more personal atmosphere or implement activities that would be more challenging in a larger class, while maintaining the same total number of class meetings. This structure could also be implemented on an informal and occasional basis to facilitate spe-

cific learning experiences; e.g., one week half the class completes an online or out-of-class assignment, while the other half participates in a hands-on workshop or field trip, and students switch roles the next class period.

As another example, accelerated learning through intersession or minimester classes can allow for even greater creativity by preceding and/or following the accelerated piece with highly engaging experiences like field work, project-based learning, or even a study-abroad experience.

Consider alternatives to examinations. One interesting trend that emerged among participants in the C21 course redesign consortium last year was the development of creative alternatives to examinations for assessing student understanding. Some faculty members have replaced final exams with integrative final projects that deeply engaged students in their own learning. Research on student learning has shown that

assessment is the dominant influence on students’ distribution of time, and coursework assignments tend to promote more consistent and less superficial learning efforts than exams. Indeed, exams are actually much poorer predictors of subsequent performance than graded coursework assignments.

Give students a real, human reason for their coursework.

Finding ways for students to connect learning to life—such as service learning, situated or authentic or professionalization assignments, and creating products for “real” audiences—can increase motivation and deepen learning. All these approaches place students in real or realistic situations where they use knowledge and skills learned in their course to help someone else. Take advantage of local resources, such as the Center for Civic and Social Responsibility or Center for Community Outreach, as well as the abundance of new user-friendly technologies (e.g., developing public blogs, or creating, editing and posting video), to create meaningful coursework assignments that look and feel more like “real,” professional work.

Connect with colleagues, especially in different disciplines.

Just as participating in intellectual exchange about research can chal-

Just as participating in intellectual exchange about research can challenge us to think in new ways, intellectual discourse about teaching can support creativity and innovation in instruction.

lence us to think in new ways, intellectual discourse about teaching can support creativity and innovation in instruction. Take advantage of opportunities to learn from different perspectives and experiences that colleagues from various disciplinary areas bring to the table. Many faculty members report that some of their most exciting and fruitful teaching innovations are generated by conversations with teachers from very different fields.

Address student buy-in and assess the efficacy of innovations

early and often. Consider at the outset of your course how you will frame student expectations. Be transparent about your expectations for student behaviors and how students can succeed in your course, as well as the reasoning behind your pedagogical choices. Use early or mid-semester surveys, online reflective journals, in-class clicker questions, or minute papers to identify student concerns and find out what students believe is most helpful. But if you collect feedback, be sure to also share with the class the results

and your approaches for addressing their concerns. If student resistance does arise, explore the reasons for their concerns. Often it is not the new method itself, but the implementation of it, or something else. Finally, acknowledge students' perspectives and explicitly address the concerns; remind students of the reasons for your pedagogical choices, and help them see they are not for your own purposes but to try to improve their learning.

—Fall 2015

Mutual responsibilities for academic performance

Dan Bernstein, CTE former director and professor emeritus of psychology

Complex changes in the social fabric of the education business are changing the alliance of students, faculty and institutions that has supported the expansion of higher education during the last several decades. The economic reality of increasing costs and decreasing public financial support of higher education has made student employment a flash point for different constituencies. Academic institutions need to keep students coming through the doors to support their comprehensive mission, so university staff are eager to help students find ways to generate funds to cover escalating costs.

Students and their families are paying more of the total cost of

education through increased user fees, and they are sensitive to the progress students make toward graduation. Students are also less likely to accept or fit a traditional student model of extended adolescence, dependent on others for financial support while living an academic life in semi-poverty.

Faculty talk among themselves about the decrease in the amount of time students give to courses outside of scheduled class hours, and everyone has anecdotes about students whose work suffered or who requested special arrangements due to work schedules.

The fundamental tension arises because there is a fixed amount of time in everyone's lives, and there are many activities competing for

their share. Few students will totally abandon their personal lives and/or work time to meet faculty expectations for outside preparation time. Similarly, few faculty will abandon their other professional goals and responsibilities to spend extensive time on teaching material that could easily be acquired through outside preparation. In a sense there has been a long-standing (if tacit) "live and let live" agreement in some circles; faculty do not flunk students who give effort well below expectations, and students do not complain too loudly about teachers whose energies are devoted primarily to other scholarly

continued page 4

PERSPECTIVES

pursuits. If not everyone learns as much as would be desirable, grade distribution curves keep everyone from facing a crisis. Students leave the institution with degrees, and faculty receive student evaluations that do not challenge their continued practices.

What is the problem?

Into this stable situation there has entered a new element that may produce some change. The community at large is expressing dissatisfaction with the product of the collective higher education enterprise; graduated students do not seem to have the skills or knowledge that some people would expect. Leaving aside the interesting question of the accuracy of that perception, the widespread movement toward accountability and assessment of student outcomes looms very large in many faculty lives. If faculty are to be evaluated by the performance of their students, then those faculty who have accepted modest student performance as inevitable will be called upon to get more performance from their charges.

Should this actually happen in a meaningful way, students would then feel a new squeeze on their time, as they would no longer be sent forward in the degree process without meeting some publicly established criteria. If students were unwilling or unable to devote extra preparation time needed to meet the performance standards, presumably the

faculty would be held responsible for failing to accomplish the institution's stated learning objectives.

What is needed?

This tension can be resolved by a cooperative and constructive conversation among constituencies to find a middle ground. It would seem useful for each element to identify its responsibilities and that we as a community consider these and other possibilities.

If faculty are to be evaluated by the performance of their students, then those faculty who have accepted modest student performance as inevitable will be called upon to get more performance from their charges.

From faculty:

- Establish reasonable criteria for student performance, including a realistic estimate of what percentage of students should reach those criteria.
- Identify and maintain adequate teaching practices that go beyond merely making material available but do not take over students' responsibility to participate in learning.
- Take advantage of developing instructional technologies to help students use out of class preparation time in the most efficient manner possible.

From students:

- Arrange for sufficient time in

your schedule to include substantial preparation and learning outside of class time.

- Accept the possibility that a degree will take longer (and will be more expensive) when employment or adult family life are a significant factor.
- From the institution:
- Work with faculty and students to establish and maintain policies on time expected for preparation outside of class.

- Give realistic advice to students and families about the need for time and the likely duration of a degree program under different levels of commitment to academics.
- Reconsider the rules and benefits related to full-time student status so that students do not register for extra classes to meet the requirements even when it is ill-advised.

—Fall 2003

It's not your parents' university anymore

Dan Bernstein, CTE former director and professor emeritus of psychology

Reading any account of the state of US higher education will give you the heebie-jeebies. From *The Wall Street Journal* to insidehighered.com, there are reports of low student performance and high tuition and student debt. Whether it is degrees offered by private for-profit corporations or famous professors putting video lectures online for thousands of people, we read that our days are numbered, and we better change or get out of the way. I do not wish to minimize the challenges we face, and we do need to increase flexibility and add options to our teaching repertoire. But I would borrow a phrase from Mark Twain and suggest that reports of our death are exaggerated.

At the course level, our work is changing rapidly, and the developments will affect a broad range of educational delivery. There are many ways that courses within a residential university can be enhanced with online and digital resources. The most important driver of these changes is the need to provide interactive and engaged courses, even as class sizes increase and financial support decreases. If students (and instructors) are to be held accountable for demonstrated academic achievement, we need to find more effective means of teaching than the conventional lecture. KU

is actively promoting this change in delivery, both to energize our courses and to provide an online portal into the benefits of KU designed and certified courses.

At the basic level, we are working with a somewhat different population of students. I was a high school student in the 1960's, and "going to college" was presented as a privilege reserved for students who performed at a high level, showing evidence of academic talent and sustained achievement. In the 1970's and 1980's, the number of higher education opportunities expanded greatly to meet increased demand from people and from employers for post-secondary degrees. Going to some form of college became more of a right for high school graduates who were willing to put time, effort, and money into a degree. In the new economy, students feel obligated to get post-secondary degrees as a minimum credential for entry into a skilled workforce, so we have a number of students who feel entitled to a degree in return for being present and paying fees. Our current students also may feel they should be able to hold extensive employment while enrolled full-time. This puts pressure on us to demand only such study as can fit around students' employment commitments. At the same time,

many students assume an attitude of familiarity toward faculty members, perhaps seeing us as service providers. Teachers need to recognize a shift in students' expectation of interaction: from deference toward an honored but distant scholar to serving as an informal helper in a common goal of rapid and successful completion. Whether we think that student attitude is good or bad, it has become part of the educational community we work in.

So our students are different in some ways, our courses are enacted with different tools, our institutions are changing, and our spot in the larger educational marketplace is shifting rapidly and in unpredictable ways. We have no choice about whether our profession will evolve or not; that evolution is occurring fast. There is no benefit to us as individuals or as institutions to sit it out and hope that the educational fads du jour will fade away, leaving us to continue working as we have for decades. So far, we can still choose what aspects of those changes we embrace and determine how we address the changing conditions of our profession. That may be our best path forward.

—Condensed from Fall 2012 article

The paradox of evidence-based teaching

Doug Ward

CTE/Journalism & Mass Communications

The spread of evidence-based teaching practices highlights a growing paradox: Even as instructors work to evaluate student learning in creative, multidimensional ways, they themselves are generally judged only through student evaluations.

Students should have a voice. As Stephen Benton and William Cashin write in a broad review of research, student evaluations can help faculty members improve their courses and help administrators spot potential problems in the classroom.

The drawback is that too many departments use *only* student evaluations to judge the effectiveness of instructors, even as they submit faculty research through a multilayered evaluation process internally and externally. Student evaluations are the only university-mandated form of gauging instructors' teaching, and many departments measure faculty members against a department mean. Those above the mean are generally viewed favorably and those below the mean are seen as a problem. That approach fails to account for the weaknesses in evaluations. For instance, Benton and Cashin and others have found:

- Students tend to give higher scores to instructors in classes they are motivated to take, and in which they do well.

- Instructors who teach large courses and entry-level courses tend to receive lower evaluations than those who teach smaller numbers of students and upper-level courses.
- Evaluation scores tend to be higher in some disciplines (especially humanities) than others (like STEM).
- Evaluation scores sometimes drop in the first few semesters of a course redesigned for active learning.
- Students have little experience in judging their own learning. As the Stanford professor Carl Wieman writes: "It is impossible for a student (or anyone else) to judge the effectiveness of an instructional practice except by comparing it with others that they have already experienced."
- Overemphasis on student evaluations often generates cynicism among faculty members about administrators' belief in the importance of high-quality teaching.

Looked at through that lens, we have not only a need but an obligation to move beyond student evaluations in gauging teaching effectiveness. We simply must add dimension and nuance to the process, as we already do with evaluation of research.

So how do we do that?

At CTE, we have developed a rubric to help departments integrate information from faculty members, peers, and students. Student evaluations are a part of the mix, but only a part. Rather, we have tried to help departments draw on the many facets of teaching into a format that provides a richer, fairer evaluation of instructor effectiveness without adding onerous burdens to evaluators.

For the most part, this approach uses the types of materials that faculty members already submit and that departments gather independently: syllabi and course schedules; teaching statements; readings, worksheets and other course materials; assignments, projects, test results and other evidence of student learning; faculty reflections on student learning; peer evaluations from team teaching and class visits; and formal discussions about the faculty member's approach to teaching.

Departments then use the rubric to evaluate that body of work, rewarding faculty members who engage in such approaches as: experimenting with innovative teaching techniques, revising course content and design based on evidence and reflection, and providing evidence of learning.

Departments can easily adapt the rubric to fit particular discipli-

nary expectations and to weight areas most meaningful to their discipline. We have already received feedback from many faculty members around the university. We've also asked a few departments to test the rubric as they evaluate faculty members for promotion and tenure, third-year review, and post-tenure review.

We will continue to refine the rubric based on the feedback we receive. Like teaching itself, it will be a constant work in progress. We see it as an important step toward making innovative teaching more visible, and toward making teaching a more credible and meaningful part of the promotion and tenure process.

Benton, Stephen L., and William E. Cashin. "Student Ratings of Teaching: A Summary of Research and Literature," IDEA Paper 50, the IDEA Center. <http://ideaedu.org>

Wieman, Carl. "A Better Way to Evaluate Undergraduate Teaching," *Change Magazine*, January-February 2015. www.changemag.org

—Spring 2016

Interpreting the three Bernstein Conditionals

Ann Cudd, former Vice Provost & Dean of Undergraduate Studies

A decade ago, KU prided itself on its traditional approach to high quality teaching. This consisted in lectures by deep thinkers at the front of the classroom who distilled the fundamentals of their disciplines into hour-long lectures and motivated students to repeat those lessons on exams. Tradition is overrated; our students and world have changed. Innovation and problem solving are the skills in high demand, and our teaching methods must evolve with the needs of today's world.

In the past decade, an insidious revolution in teaching has been fomented here and has brought a new regime to power. This is the revolution of teaching as intellectual work, engineered through backward design to achieve clear, intentional student learning outcomes. It began with Dan Bernstein's patient but insistent logic that can be summarized in three conditionals:

1. If teaching is as important to the university's mission as research, both teaching and research should be evaluated and rewarded with similar rigor;
2. If intellectual work requires serious peer review and teaching is intellectual work, then teaching requires serious peer review;
3. If standards for excellence in research are to be set by the discipline, then standards for excellence in teaching are to be set by the discipline.

His practice has been to present us with provocative conditionals and let us draw our own conclusions.

The Center for Teaching Excellence has provided opportunities for faculty to follow this logic. Best Practice Institutes, the CTE gallery of portfolios of intellectually engaged teaching and learning, and a departmental teaching award that asks departments to think of their degree programs as a connected path to culminating learning objectives have created teachers (and administrators) across KU who understand backward design and speak the language of learning outcomes. Rubrics for assessing those outcomes have become common for grading and for assessing skills within the major. The KU Core is the signal achievement of this revolution, bringing the logic of student learning outcomes to general education, and clearly communicating its rationale to our students, faculty, and staff.

A tipping point has been reached, and teaching at KU will not go back to its sage-on-the-stage model of the past. But we must not rest on the laurels of successful change. As we go forward, faculty and administrators must keep repeating the Bernstein conditionals and continue to evolve our teaching to meet the learning outcomes that our disciplines, students, and the needs of a changing world demand.

—Spring 2014

Four defining features of teaching as inquiry

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has been a catalyst for teaching as inquiry. Two Carnegie leaders, Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings, have written about this in *The Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching Commons*. In it, they propose “a definition that reflects an evolving set of ideas and practices that can and should shape the work of faculty as they bring their habits, methods, and commitments as scholars to their work as teachers—and to their students’ learning” (18). Huber and Hutchings identify four defining features:

- 1. Questioning.** In a survey of scholars from the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), the authors found that the most powerful motivator for becoming involved with teaching as inquiry was questions about student learning that the scholars wanted to explore. Huber and Hutchings note that questions about “what works” frequently lead to open-ended questions about “what happens.” “Serious work on teaching begins, that is, where all scholarship begins, with curiosity and an urge to understand more clearly what is happening and why” (21).
- 2. Gathering and exploring evidence.** Teaching as inquiry “entails systematic, disciplined inquiry, and requires hard thinking about how to gather and analyze evidence” (24). The authors list an array of options for evidence, including course portfolios, student work, videotapes, ethnographic interviews, classroom observations, questionnaires, and longitudinal tracking. This is as it should be, according to Huber and Hutchings: “Teaching and learning are complex processes, and no single source or type of evidence can provide a sufficient window into the difficult questions raised by student learning. ... As in any research, the challenge is to employ the right set of methods and the best sources of evidence to explore the question in ways that will be credible and significant” (24).
- 3. Trying out and refining new strategies.** Huber and Hutchings indicate that “those who become involved in systematic investigation of their classrooms almost universally report that the work leads to important changes” (26). Among CASTL scholars, 81 percent stated that the quality of their students’ learning has been improved as a result of their work as scholars of teaching and learning. Sixty-nine percent believed that more of their students achieved high standards. Many also indicated that questions about student learning caused them to develop more demanding modes of student assessment. Thus, the authors suggest, the results of teaching as inquiry will be tried out and used for improvement.
- 4. Going public.** “The scholarship of teaching and learning is about more than individual improvement and development—it is about producing knowledge that is available for others to use and build on” (27). Work on teaching, Huber and Hutchings believe, “is not really finished until it has been captured in ways that others can see and examine” (27).

Finally, the authors note that, like other complex intellectual work, the features are not often linear: “The fact that its four elements occur in all kinds of permutations and rhythms makes it an easier fit with the variable rhythms of faculty life itself” (29).

—February 2007

Teaching Matters is published by CTE, and edited by Judy Eddy. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

KU Center for Teaching Excellence
1455 Jayhawk Blvd., Room 135
Lawrence, KS 66045-7573
785-864-4199
cte@ku.edu
www.cte.ku.edu
