

# CTE NOTEBOOK

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## “Proactive Pedagogy”

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### **Reinert CTE Mission Statement**

The mission of the Paul C. Reinert, S.J. Center for Teaching Excellence is to support Saint Louis University faculty and graduate students so that they can better serve the intellectual, spiritual, and social needs of all learners.

### **The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence**

Saint Louis University  
Verhaegen Hall Room 314  
3634 Lindell Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
(314) 977-3944  
[cte@slu.edu](mailto:cte@slu.edu)



## Fostering a Culture of Assessment

Dr. Jay Hammond  
Department of Theological Studies

In June 2005 the Department of Theological Studies (DTS) received a \$70,000 grant (entitled “Advancing Ongoing Program Review as Proactive Pedagogy by Creating Learning Communities that Foster Assessment”) from The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. The goal of the three-year grant is to formalize a faculty owned model for ongoing program review that is *learning-centered, pedagogically driven, and practically actionable*. To accomplish this, the grant provides release-time for all interested DTS faculty to form learning communities that will design/implement an assessment model. In short, the learning communities utilize the release time from teaching to understand better how to assess student learning.

### **The Grant’s Focus and Design**

*Focus.* The grant focuses on three questions regarding teaching-assessment-learning: (1) Why are we doing what we are doing?, (2) What are we doing? , and (3) How do we know how we are doing?. These basic questions approach assessment as more than just a set of policies and systems. At its core, assessment is all about human relationships and therefore a reflection of any organization’s culture. How the DTS collectively answers these simple questions will significantly impact the departmental culture regarding assessment. Fostering a culture that regards learning and assessment as a supportive partnership, built on trust, to foster professional excellence, will establish different assessment regimes than cultures built on imposed rules, mistrust, and/or fear of reprisal. Likewise, a departmental culture that understands assessment as learning-centered will develop different systems to those where assessment is incidental to the “real work” of teaching and research.

*Design.* The three *why, what* and *how* questions frame the grant’s design, which consists of two parts: (1) five learning communities comprised of four faculty each and (2) three annual all faculty weekend retreats each April. Over three years, the five learning communities each engage in twelve seminars. Six of the seminars are uniform in that all the cohorts cover the same basic “curriculum” (readings, projects, presentations), and six seminars are tailored to meet the specific focus of different cohorts, that is, activities that work toward answering one of the three basic questions that frame the grant. The customized seminars direct the learning community toward the all-faculty retreats.

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## From the Director

Pro-active, faculty driven conversations focusing on the integral role of pedagogy in assessment and curriculum reform are occurring in many departments at Saint Louis University. These initiatives are resulting in revitalized teaching as department colleagues meet to discuss connections between teaching, assessment and curriculum. In some cases the discussions have been prompted by changes within the discipline, while other conversations have been driven by a desire to foster a culture of assessment among department members. Regardless of the impetus for the discussions, the result has been faculty actively engaged in discussing teaching. Over the past 18 months, I have been privileged to take part in some of those discussions and welcome the opportunity to share with you through this issue of the CTE notebook information on two such initiatives.

This fall, the department of Aviation Sciences introduced a revised curriculum and new pedagogical initiative that grew out of departmental discussions and workshops that looked at the missions of the University, college and department, the five SLU dimensions and demands of the profession in terms of student learning. Many thoughtful discussions among department faculty on teaching and student learning issues preceded the department members' decision to adopt a problem-based learning pedagogy to support the new curriculum. Initial student response to the use of the problem-based learning approach in the new curriculum has been very positive.

This issue of the CTE Notebook features the department of Theological Studies' program to form faculty cohorts or "think-tanks" consisting of members of the department. Funded by a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, this initiative is promoting department-wide discussions on pedagogy, student learning and assessment.

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The "reports" from the seminars frame and direct the departmental dialogue so issues can be identified, discerned and evaluated, allowing for collectively enacted decisions. The design is intentionally collaborative on two levels. First, the four member seminars collaborate to (1) learn generally about assessment as proactive pedagogy, (2) consider specifically one of the three questions for the faculty retreats, (3) work on a specific action items related to those questions, and (4) present their findings/recommendations at the retreats. Second, the-all faculty retreats then provides collaborative feedback so when the next learning community takes up the baton, they can reflect upon and incorporate their colleagues' concerns/comments as they move the project forward. The retreats will also provide evaluation of the project as it progresses.

### **The Curriculum**

In Fall 2005 I met bi-weekly with Mary Stephen, Director of the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence, to devise a "curriculum" for the learning community seminars. This semester, the first seminar of Ben Asen, Dan Finucane, Jim Kelhoffer, Ron Modras, and myself worked through several readings including: *What Teaching Excellence Means at SLU* (manuscript provided by CTE), Parker Palmer's *The*

*Courage to Teach*, Ken Bain's *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Barbara Walvoord's, *Assessment Clear and Simple*, *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* ([www.jsea.org](http://www.jsea.org)), *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach* ([www.jsea.org](http://www.jsea.org)), and a reading packet on existing University and DTS assessment policies and measures. While these readings facilitated the seminar's critical reflection on the question, why are we doing what we are doing, the real fruit of the seminar was the conversations that meandered through many topics, e.g.: (1) how assessment involves teaching, learning, personal and community dimensions, (2) our own "war stories" about teaching, (3) sharing successful assessment techniques, (4) SLU's Five Dimensions, (5) the characteristics of SLU students and how they learn, (6) the politics and pitfalls of assessment, and (7) the perennial question of "why." Moreover, Mary Stephen came to facilitate a conversation on classroom assessment, and Julie Weissman, Associate Provost, led a discussion on program assessment. All these conversations allowed the seminar to envision assessment as proactive pedagogy that improves student learning while reducing some of the stress of teaching. Via the conversations, the seminar realized four important facts: (1) the DTS has the expertise necessary to create

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a good assessment model because faculty are already doing a lot of assessment, but efforts need to be clarified and coordinated; (2) while University administration strongly supports our efforts and does not expect a prefabricated “cookie-cutter” assessment model, they do expect our model to coordinate with the Five Dimensions; (3) if the DTS does not enact its own assessment model, someone else will create one for them— one that likely will not best serve our students and teachers; and (4) process is a key ingredient of good assessment, both in the ongoing practice of assessing learning, and in the effort to achieve faculty ownership of our outcome-assessment initiative. For me, having the opportunity to engage in a sustained discussion about the profession of teaching with respected colleagues provided a real occasion of personal growth and pedagogical insight.

### Recommendations and Evaluations

*Recommendations.* The seminar conversations produced five recommendations that were presented at the April 7-8, 2006 all-faculty retreat at the Pere Marquette Lodge. The recommendations are: (1) the creation of a policy statement, which the faculty approved and which the seminar has drafted pending final approval in August; (2) the design and implementation of a qualitative and quantitative survey as part of the annual review process, which integrates assessment within existing DTS procedures; (3) the allocation of at least one faculty meeting per semester to assessment development/review so that assessment remains ongoing; (4) have one colloquium per academic year dedicated to pedagogical techniques and/or best practices, which extends the conversation beyond the faculty cohort; and (5) the creation of an assessment model for courses and programs that: (a) designs the content or *what* is assessed according to Ken Bain’s *What the Best College Teachers Do*, (b) implements the protocol or *how* the assessment plan functions according to Barbara Walvoord’s *Assessment Clear and Simple*, and (c) utilizes *how* teachers already evaluate (i.e., grading) to create a more uniform and explicit DTS assessment process according to the examples in Barbara Walvoord’s *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning And Assessment*. Now the next two learning communities will pick up the baton and move the process forward by defining the specific learning outcomes for the various DTS courses and programs as coordinated with the Five Dimensions of the Saint Louis University Experience.

*Evaluations.* Judging from the evaluations of the all-faculty retreat, the retreat was a success.

Many commented that the conversation is indispensable in creating an assessment model that the faculty “buys into.” After the retreat 13 faculty rated their attitude toward assessment as either positive or very positive, 2 were ambivalent, and 1 was negative. The conversations at the retreat signal that the DTS is committed to creating a *learning-centered, pedagogically driven, and practically actionable* assessment model. However, possibly the greatest benefit of the seminar conversations is passing on the conversation itself to the entire DTS. Just like in the classroom, conversation is sometimes hard to come by, but when the discussion starts, new vistas open, fresh ideas emerge, and renewed energy animates the learning process; so too with teachers who assess student learning.

### Sharing the Seminar Experience

Even though the seminar made concrete recommendations to the DTS regarding pedagogy and assessment, it was the transmission of the seminar conversation to the larger DTS faculty that proved to be most valuable and important. Ron Modras speaks of this critical element: “The greatest barrier, as I see it, is a lack of consciousness stemming from a lack of conversation . To create a culture of mission and assessment, faculty need to talk about it seriously, professionally, and personally.” Ben Asen also speaks to the catalytic power of our conversations: “I think the faculty retreat went a long way toward breaking down the barrier of resistance toward assessment. I think we have successfully convinced a majority of our colleagues that the real issues are teaching and learning and how to improve both to enhance our departmental as well as our University missions. The word ‘assessment’ does not have the same negative connotation

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## Congratulations Alisha Francis !



Recipient of  
The Psychology Department's

### **2006 Napoli Endowed Teaching Award**

The award recognizes the accomplishments of outstanding teachers in training in the department's graduate programs. Psychology faculty reviewed the portfolios of a number of highly-qualified graduate students in deciding this year's award.

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that it had when we began . . . I think we have made excellent progress.” Dan Finucane comments that we have only begun a conversation, which the department has now committed itself: “I believe we have made major strides in opening up the faculty to discuss pedagogy and assessment. The next challenges lie in creating specific ways to share our specific techniques and tools. Hopefully the climate that we have begun to create can be deepened and sustained.”

While the conversations were wide ranging, its center was the question of assessment. Specifically the seminar participants commented on their changing attitude toward assessment. Ben Asen observes: “In the end assessment is not only for educational purposes, but also for professorial growth and development. The real point is not to please the ‘assessment police,’ but to facilitate more effective teaching and learning . . . Through the readings, discussions and presentations we have had, it has become clearer to me what assessment is, and what it is not. It is the honing and improvement of what I am already doing. Assessment is not confined only to learning that can be ‘objectively’ tested. It is not merely quantitative but also qualitative . . . I understand better that there are *direct* as well as *indirect* measures of assessment. Not everything can be evaluated in terms of

numbers and percentages.” Similarly, Dan Finucane remarks: “Identifying learning objectives and assessing how well they are being met is very important. What has expanded is the realization that there are multiple ways (quantitative and qualitative) to assess.” In a different vein, Ron Modras also notes that assessment inherently involves change: “Assessment is important because it is about honesty in advertising, about educational institutions and individual instructors fulfilling their promises, and about improvement . . . Measuring success and the lack thereof allows one to make improvements. This means that assessment is also about change, always a challenge in academe.”

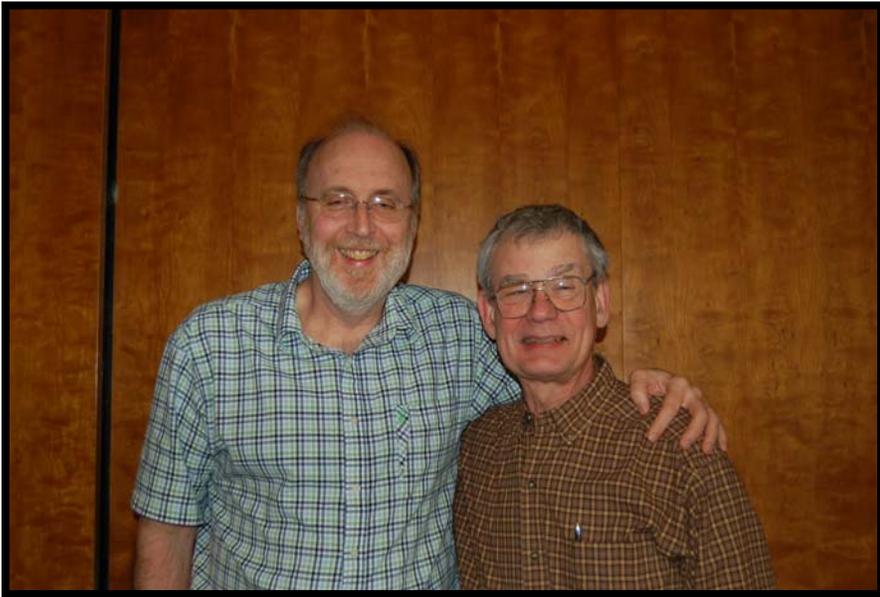
Stepping back from the first seminar experience, it seems that the conversation spawned meaningful change, and the change has spurred more conversation. Is not this the same goal of pedagogy and assessment? Engage in an educational conversation, assess its success, change for improvement and engage anew in the educational conversation. Now that the DTS has collectively answered for themselves *why* we assess teaching and learning, the second seminar will engage the next question of *what* to assess in the Fall of 2006.

## 2006 Faculty Portfolio Retreat Participants



**Front Row, Left to Right:** Donna Halloran, Pediatrics; Bonnie Wilson, CSB Economics; Mary Stephen, Reinert CTE; Cheryl Miller, Biomedical Engineering

**Back Row, Left to Right:** Zaitao Pan, Earth & Atmospheric Science; Alisha Francis, Reinert CTE; Anjali Despande, Public Health; Jim Kelhoffer, Theological Studies; Marilyn Miller, Retreat Facilitator; Maggie Jiao Ma, Aviation Sciences; Brian Downes, Biology; Masih Skokrani, Clinical Laboratory Sciences; Jillon Vander Wal, Psychology



# Thank You!

## Dr. John Pauly & Dr. Jim Korn

### From Dr. John Pauly

My dad, a now-retired Chicago public high school teacher and administrator, likes to say that in your first ten years of teaching, you never really earn your keep. After that, they cannot pay you enough.

True that. After 28 years of full-time college teaching, I have come to appreciate the wisdom of my dad's aphorism. Without fully knowing what is to come, we teachers submit to a long and painful apprenticeship. The first several years, we constantly trip over our own intellectual shortcomings, failures of imagination, and social clumsiness. Later, if we are lucky and work hard and listen to our students, we do better—but only so long as we never forget the sheer effort it took to find our stride.

The Center for Teaching Excellence helped me understand all that, with a depth and passion I never could have imagined. My memories of the center open with a profoundly moving conversation and lunch with Jim Korn, Belden Lane, Cheryl Cavallo, and the late John DiTiberio, held at the idyllic West County home of Debbie Natoli's father. And they begin to close last year, with Ken Bain's discussion of his wonderful book *What the Best College Teachers Do*. Along the way, the staff—Debbie, Maria, Mary, Lori, Sandy—have always sustained the possibilities our small planning group envisioned in that first conversation—to nurture a community of teachers, and to offer each of us the time and support we need to earn our students' trust.

### From Dr. Jim Korn

I began my affiliation with our teaching center when it was a corner room in the Graduate School suite in O'Donnell Hall; J. J. O'Brien was the guiding spirit – and probably still is. For a while we had our own home in O'Brien House, where we became a true community of teachers. I believe that the spirit and community remain in our current Verhaegen quarters with our superb staff.

My involvement with the CTE has been the most rewarding part of my final decade at SLU. In the Center and in my department I have been able to work with teachers facing day-to-day challenges from their students. The activity I valued most was helping teachers relate the mundane aspects of our teaching craft to a broader view of education represented by their teaching philosophy statements.

While we master the new technologies, I maintain the teaching will always involve what I call, "closeness learning." In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer writes about two very different kinds of teaching experiences that most of us have had: There are "moments when we can hardly hold the joy" as students catch our enthusiasm for our subject. Then at other times "the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused...that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham." Teaching is about closeness and community, with each other and with our students, as we share both joy and disappointment.

I appreciate this chance to say a special thank you and God bless you to all those who made this center a wonderful place for all of us who are continuing our development as teachers.

## 2006 Teaching Conferences

### **28th Annual Summer Institute on College Teaching**

June 4-8, 2006

The College of William and Mary; Williamsburg, VA

Applications are due by May 23, 2006.

Topics: Instructional innovation, testing and grading, small group strategies, lecturing, cooperative learning, technology in the classroom, course and teacher evaluation, questioning skills, teaching and learning styles, student assessment, syllabus construction and how to make classes more interactive.

To Register: Go to

<http://www.vtc.odu.edu/>

### **The Teaching Professor Conference: Learning to Teach Across a Career**

May 19-21, 2006

Gaylord Opryland Convention Ctr, Nashville, TN

Registration deadline – May 1

This conference combines interactive professional development, panel discussions, in-depth case studies, and networking opportunities, to provide “hands-on” learning opportunities.

For more information go to:

[www.teachingprofessor.com](http://www.teachingprofessor.com)

### **Faculty-Student Partnerships in Teaching and Learning**

May 16-19, 2006

SUNY-Geneseo (20 mi. from Rochester, NY)

Eighty plus presentations, workshops, roundtables, and posters on all aspects of teaching and learning, including Teaching Creative Thinking, Mentoring for Retention, Collaborative Research with Undergraduates, Integrating Community & Campus, Student Perceptions of Advisement, Projects for Capstone Courses, Grading Writing, Teaching with Undergraduate TAs, and Building Rubrics.

See complete schedule and register at

<http://tlc.geneseo.edu/conference>

### **What the Best College Teachers Do**

Summer Institute June 21-23, 2006

New York City Area

A three day institute based on Ken Bain’s award winning and best selling book *What the Best College Teachers Do* with appearances by some of the subjects of the 15 year study of excellence in college education.

For registration go to:

[www.nyu.edu/cte/summer06.pdf](http://www.nyu.edu/cte/summer06.pdf)

### **Mentoring and Supervision for the Responsible Conduct of Research**

July 24-25

Eric P. Newman Education Center  
Washington University, St. Louis

The conference is geared towards principal investigators, research staff, grad students and postdoctoral students

For more information visit the website:

<http://epi.wustl.edu/epi/msrcr.htm>

### **Jesuit and Feminist Education: Transformative Dis- courses for Teaching and Learning**

October 27-29, 2006

Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut

This conference will explore how the principles of Jesuit education intersect with contemporary feminist approaches in order to gain deeper insight into multicultural educational contexts. It is organized around the Ignatian paradigm’s central concepts: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation.

For more information go to

<http://www.fairfield.edu/jfemconf>

### **2006 Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network Conference: Theory and Research for a Scholarship of Practice**

October 25-29, 2006

Portland, Oregon

This conference aims to support all its participants in their ongoing commitment to be as well equipped as possible in the service of teaching, learning, and organizational development. Sessions, mealtime conversations, educational expeditions, and other informal opportunities will all facilitate the sharing of programs and approaches grounded in theory and research.

For more information go to

<http://podnetwork.org/conferences/2006/index.htm>

### **Making a Greater Difference: Connecting to Transformational Agendas**

November 9-12, 2006

International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL); Washington, D.C.

Increasing the vitality of the scholarship of teaching and learning depends on the strength of its linkages with larger systems of change. The 2006 conference emphasizes how the scholarship of teaching and learning interacts with other agents of change.

For more information and registration go to:

<http://www.issotl.org>

**CTE  
Welcomes  
Gail  
Herzog,  
Assistant  
Director for  
Service  
Learning**



Gail comes to the Center with a background in Communication and Theology offering a diverse array of professional experiences. She has a long history of teaching in higher education including a number of years as an Affiliate Faculty in the School for Professional Studies where she was a 2002 recipient of the Faculty Excellence Award.

In her new role as Assistant Director for Service Learning, Gail looks forward to working with faculty from across the university to support the integration of service learning into the curriculum. Gail firmly believes in Jesuit Mission and the importance of service learning as part of the educational experience. For more information contact Gail at 977-4214 or at [herzog@slu.edu](mailto:herzog@slu.edu).

### **Assessment References**

**Books:**

*Effective Grading*

by Barbara Walvoord & Virginia Johnson Anderson

*Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*

by Barbara Walvoord

*Classroom Assessment Techniques : A Handbook for College Teachers*

by Thomas Angelo & K. Patricia Cross

**Website:**

The Center for Instructional Development and Research  
<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/CATools.htm>

## **Congratulations, May 2006 Certificate Recipients**

### **Certificate of University Teaching Skills**

- Anbreen Bashir, Biology  
(Mentor: Dr. Wesley Leverich)
- Billy Brennan, Communication  
(Mentor: Dr. Liese Hutchinson)
- Rebeka Cook, Public Health  
(Mentor: Dr. Darcy Scharff)
- Rebecca Dohrman, Communication  
(Mentor: Dr. Paaige Turner)
- Angie Juarez-Monger, Sociology & Criminal Justice (Mentor: Dr. Richard Seiter)
- Stacie Metz, Public Health  
(Mentor: Dr. Kathleen Wyrwich)
- Maze Ndonwi, Biology  
(Mentor: Dr. Jack Kennell)
- Alicia Noddings, Educational Studies  
(Mentor: Dr. Linda Buffkin)
- Kristan Pierce, Nutrition and Dietetics  
(Mentor: Dr. Mildred Mattfeldt-Beman)
- Jaime Poole, Earth & Atmospheric Science  
(Mentor: Dr. Charles Graves )
- Terri Rebman, Nursing,  
(Mentor: Bill Stanhope PA,MS)
- Zach Schaefer, Communication  
(Mentor: Dr. Paaige Turner )
- Rick Wilson, International Business  
(Mentor: Dr. Brian Till)
- Joe Zlatic, Sociology & Criminal Justice  
(Mentor: Dr. Norm White)

### **Participation Certificate**

- Yu-Ping Chang, Nursing
- Jeremy Main, Public Policy
- Sithokozile Maposa, Nursing
- Colene McEntee, Communication
- Maureen Walsh , Theological Studies

# A Day with Dr. Barbara Walvoord

presented by: The Office of the Provost, The Office of Planning and Decision Resources, Undergraduate Experience, & The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence

**Tuesday, May 16, 2006**

Busch Student Center, Saint Louis Room

Barbara E. Walvoord, Ph.D., author of *Effective Grading and Assessment Clear and Simple*,  
Chair of Assessment Committee, Fellow of the Institute for Educational Initiatives,  
and Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame will offer two workshops to SLU faculty and staff.

**For more information or to register go to <http://fyp.slu.edu>**

## Making the Grading Process Fair, Efficient & Useful

**8:30 a.m. to Noon**

The workshop will address a number of issues related to learning, assessment, and evaluation, including:

- Creating assignments that demand high-quality student thinking
- Making grading consistent across sections of the same course
- Dealing with “grade inflation”
- Helping students focus on the learning, not just on the grade
- Making grading time-efficient
- Using classroom evaluation of student learning for departmental and program-level improvement

## Practical & Feasible Ways to Assess & Improve Student Learning in Departments & General Education

**1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

This workshop guides participants through the steps of constructing or revising assessment plans. It is most useful for department teams. Participants are invited to bring current assessment plans or documents such as learning goals or curriculum rationales that might be useful in constructing assessment plans.

Issues include:

- Getting department members on board
- The most basic, no frills assessment plan
- Assessment within the available time and resources
- Constructing workable goals for learning
- Using data for the benefit of the department & students



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Verhaegen Hall Room 314  
3634 Lindell Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
(314) 977-3944  
[cte@slu.edu](mailto:cte@slu.edu)  
<http://cte.slu.edu/>