

From the Director
Debra Lohe, Ph.D.

Learning is transformative. The more we do it, the more we are transformed and can, in turn, transform the world around us. And the process is, ideally, a life-long one. At a Jesuit institution, especially, we are committed to the formation of lifelong learners. And in the Center, we see faculty and graduate students everyday who are committed to learning more – about themselves, about their students, about what it really takes to *form women and men for others*.

In this issue of *The Notebook*, we asked columnists to share their thoughts on the essence of learning, and our contributors wrote open letters to students. Two common questions underlie most of the pieces here: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to know? Ultimately, the contributors in this issue challenge students to take up the charge inherent in Ignatian pedagogy and spirituality: seek reflective answers to meaningful questions, and act upon the discoveries made along the way. As you head into the summer, I offer my own open letter.

Dear Teachers:

As you close out this academic year and head into summer, plan to spend a little time in quiet reflection. Think back on how you started the year, the high hopes you had for your students, for your own work and productivity. Consider the new relationships you formed, the accomplishments you had; concentrate on the challenges, the stumbling-and-fumbling along the way. Try to discern the fruits of all these things. As you settle into summer's pace, commit to trying one new thing this summer that might renew or rekindle or re-energize your love of teaching. Particularly if you've been teaching for a while – or if you've spent the last year or two chasing tenure – try to reconnect with what you love most about teaching. Let this reflection infuse all your rest and preparation and anticipation of the new academic year to come, whether it starts soon in a summer session, or whether it begins next August. Let the passion spur you to undertake learning of your own—take an art class, volunteer at a dog shelter, write a memoir. Stretching yourself in some new way will bring you new insight into what it means to be a student, remind you of the humility that lifelong learning demands. Ultimately, it will recommit you to *cura personalis* and the care of the whole person when you walk through the classroom door next term.

News from the Center: A Farewell (of sorts)

As we take our leave for the summer, we also take our leave of this newsletter format and of our current name. This is the last issue of *The Notebook* to be published in its current form. Beginning July 1, *The Notebook* will be transformed from a 4-times-per year newsletter to a weekly blog, hosted on the Center's new and improved website. In choosing a blog format, we aim to provide more dynamic, more timely notes for the classroom. Here, we will feature current teaching innovations at SLU, distill recent research on teaching and learning, and

highlight upcoming events. You'll hear from various Center staff, as well as SLU faculty and graduate students, on a range of topics, and you'll have an opportunity to subscribe to the blog, so you can stay up-to-date on the latest happenings in the Center.

The new website and blog are just two of the innovations you'll find in the Center next year. As we move from the period of the Center's *formation* to a period of *transformation*, we will be celebrating our 15th anniversary as a center, and celebrating a new name: the Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning.

When you next see us, it will be in a whole new platform, with a whole new name, and a renewed commitment to sharing best practices and research and nurturing SLU's community of reflective, innovative teachers.

Have a great summer!

Columnists

Hey, Human, How are you?

Benjamin de Foy, Ph.D. Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

What grade would a computer get in your class?
What grade would you get in someone else's class?
Would the person grading your answers know you were not a computer?

Welcome to the brave new world of the Turing test. Take a bunch of computer programs designed to make you think they're a human when you talk with them. Mix them up with a control group of real humans. Set them up against a group of judges who will interact anonymously with each "entity" for 5 minutes and must figure out who is who. The computer program that fools the greatest number of judges into thinking that it is a human gets the Loebner prize for the "Most Human Computer." The human that manages to convince the greatest number of judges that s/he really is a human and not a computer gets the "Most Human Human" prize.

The best computer programs are getting close to Turing's 50 year old prediction: they can fool nearly 30% of judges into thinking they are humans. Nearly - but not quite - yet... On the human side, in 2008, three people failed to convince the judges that they were humans. Fortunately, humanity made a comeback in 2009, led by Brian Christian who went on to tell the tale (Christian, 2011; Christian, 2011).

But how do you do it, when computers have become so good at finding information, at figuring out what we want, at predicting what we will type or say? Ponder this long enough and you will find yourself, like Christian, having to write your version of Daniel Gilbert's "Sentence": "The human being is the only animal that ..." One way to win in the early days was by being moody, irritable, and obnoxious - a sad reflection on human nature perhaps. Brian Christian has a better

way: to maximize the number of “swaps” in the conversation: interrupt, respond, go back and forth as much as you can. In that way, you can make a connection, a human connection.

Let us take a leaf from Christian’s book: what is it that we can do that a computer cannot? What is it that we can get a computer to do so that we can do more: more nurturing, more guiding, more motivating, more challenging? How can we be more human?

Christian, B. (2011). Mind vs. Machine. *Atlantic Magazine*, March.

Christian, B. (2011). *The Most Human Human, What Talking With Computers Teaches Us About What It Means to Be Alive*. New York: Doubleday.

Removing the Separation between Learning and Life: Preparing Students for Lifelong Learning

Deanne Marie Mason, Ph.D. Nursing-Madrid

Lifelong learning requires resisting what Parker Palmer calls, “the violence of our knowledge” (Palmer, 1993, p. 1), a tendency to view knowledge and learning as solely a means to create order in the world via the mind. A competition emerges in which the person with the most knowledge wins; knowing is demoted to an arbitrary process constructed on the cultural norms of the community in which it is developed. A knowledgeable person is separate and distinct from those of lesser knowledge; a violence of division begins. The world becomes a realm to be manipulated; once all necessary manipulations are mastered, no further knowledge is necessary. The search and drive for learning is over because the game has been won.

Palmer proposes another type of knowledge, one that is driven by compassion and connection through an embodied knowledge incorporating the mind and heart. A dual-sided knowledge encourages the learner to enter the reality of others while simultaneously allowing others to enter the learner’s reality. Within this mixing of realities, a truth is revealed between the members. This knowledge requires an openness to change by both the learner and the other, and perhaps to sacrifice, as part of a shared experience. Through this process, knowledge is rooted in involvement, mutuality, and accountability.

In order to create lifelong learners, students must be formed to be open, receiving, and receptive to change. Educational environments must find ways to teach knowledge that is informed by both the mind and the heart. Facts are facts; immovable. However, facts that are taught in relation to their impact, projection, interaction, and culture become embodied. Learners who develop knowledge through a shared experience with educators learn to carry those facts, with their larger meaning, and apply them in future interactions. Knowledge becomes a shared experience rather than a competition. Knowledge stretches and extends into the future by living with the learner, growing and changing as new relationships are built and new realities emerge. The power to carry and share knowledge in this way launches learners towards lifelong learning.

Palmer, P. (1993) *To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey*. San Francisco: Harper.

Learning’s Punctuation Mark

Lynda A. Morrison, Ph.D. Molecular Microbiology and Immunology

Learning involves experience, practice, and reflection on the experience, but it begins with something unknown or unexpected. It begins with a question.

A friend taught me the most about life-long learning. He recently died, 6 weeks before his 100th birthday. Curiosity helped him get out of bed each day, kept him going through work and social activities, and infused his greetings to all those around him. My friend delved into a startling array of subjects. He always probed the frontier of his knowledge, exploring a wide array of subjects like Jungian philosophy, Japanese silk screen, irrationality in the psychology of investing, and the form and function of neurons. As the end inevitably drew near, in quintessential fashion he plumbed the great mystery of life and what lies beyond.

Curiosity kept my friend youthful even in old age. At the memorial service for this life-long learner, a family member quipped “his life was cut short at 99.”

Perhaps what most set my friend apart was how his curiosity enriched not only his own life, but the lives of all those around him. It extended far beyond facts and theories. He expressed a boundless interest in everyone he met, for everyone had something to teach him. Sharing laughs and sharing perspectives built an inclusive knowledge base of the world around him. His manner taught me that life-long learning isn't so much an intellectual exercise; it's a life skill.

In this digital age of exponential advances, continued learning keeps one's mind nimble and outlook relevant. Writer and futurist Alvin Toffler wrote, “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.” We must be able to adapt swiftly to changes occurring around us, to recognize and solve problems...in essence be experimenters. By adopting an attitude of curiosity, we not only survive but thrive. Perhaps Benjamin Franklin best expressed this core value of life-long learning: “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

Contributors-Open Letters to Students on Life-Long Learning

Elizabeth Abraham

Pediatrics

As you go forth, know that you were loved and willed into creation by God himself, and that He has made you with a purpose in mind. Your talents are no accident. Take time for silence, for that is when you will hear the still small voice that helps you find your way. You will find yourself only when you give yourself away, with love. Be kind and patient with others, especially when it is difficult to do so. Say you are sorry quickly, and always regard others as better than yourself. Do small things with great love.

Faculty Members in OSOT Department

Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy

As you leave the University, we hope you will reflect upon contexts and development across the lifespan. We hope you will not rest upon a single rung, but instead, scale the ladder of learning, fueling your passion in whatever you do.

David Ford

Biochemistry

Remember the principle of your Jesuit education in your future endeavors to be men and women for others. Go forward in your pursuits with drive, passion, happiness and a positive outlook.

Kim Levenhagen

Physical Therapy

As you begin a new chapter in your lives, I hope you continue to live out the Jesuit philosophy of being men and women for others. Never forget the classmates, faculty and staff of Saint Louis University who have challenged you to live and reflect on this Ignatian principle. Every day is a gift; share it with others, and live with no regrets.

Richard Ryffel

Finance

Learning is a lifelong marathon, and while your pace may slow, you must always be learning, lest others pass you. Even as you do not see obvious mile markers in the future, look to continue your trek. Find new courses which challenge you and which allow you to fail. Find time to pause and enjoy the journey. Find people who love to learn, and take the journey with them. Most of all, know that learning keeps you young even as aging makes you wiser.

Mike Shaner

Management

THINK about everything you do! It doesn't matter what you do, it matters if you WANT to do it. Nobody means to get carried away in MEDIOCRITY, but it happens unless you think about everything you do—unless you make every choice the best one you know how to make!! Don't leave life with regrets!

Christine Werner

Physician Assistant Education

Your memories of SLU and your education will last a life time! Use the tools of wisdom and knowledge you have learned in your academics to serve the world and people you will be encountering for years to come. SLU will always be here for you!