



Center for Teaching Excellence Hampton University Teaching Matters

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Reflections on My First Year as a Faculty Member at Hampton University



By Dr. Brandy K. Richeson, Assistant Professor of Counseling

My first year as a new faculty member at Hampton University began as both a “nerve-racking” and exciting experience! Transitioning from a public school background where I spent the last 10 years, I was unsure what to expect and how to maneuver the day-to-day activities in higher education. Many of the resources offered to help new faculty become acquainted can be found within the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and it was through CTE that I learned how I could best be an asset to Hampton University.

Our initial meeting was the New Faculty Orientation Session which gave new faculty members a chance to get to know each other and to share our thoughts and feelings about being new to the Hampton University community. The session also gave us a chance to meet and discuss some of the expectations of new faculty and the experiences of more seasoned faculty. Many of the questions that we had were answered in the session, and we felt more at ease as we began to prepare for our first year as new professors.

We then became part of the Faculty Mentoring Program, which paired us with more seasoned mentors who were able to provide us with insight and assistance as needed on pressing questions and concerns that we may have had as new faculty. The mentors served as colleagues, friends and advisors, and were instrumental in making our first year run smoothly, whether they were providing advice or serving as a “listening ear.” Many of us also got the opportunity to work with our mentors on research and writing projects, and we were happy for the networking opportunities that these relationships provided.

Throughout the course of the year, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) has provided monthly Academic Excellence Workshops that addressed important higher education issues such as innovative methods of instructional delivery (e.g., the Flipped Classroom), how to incorporate technology into teaching using the Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) and CAMTASIA programs, how to successfully document our first year of professional performance, and finally, how to document our academic progression with emphasis placed on teaching, research and service. Lastly, these meetings were held in different settings which also allowed us to become more familiar with the campus.

The workshops and Mentoring Program offered through The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) have been very helpful to me as I have adjusted as a new faculty member at Hampton University. I feel that these programs have strengthened me as I prepare for my second year, and have given me the ability to bring new innovative teaching methods to my students both in and outside of the classroom. The programs have also taught me what is required as a faculty member in order to successfully progress in higher education.

After attending all of the Academic Excellence Workshops this year, I would advise other new faculty to incorporate such helpful workshop information into everyday life. For example, after we learned about the Flipped Classroom, I shifted my classroom around so that I had a clear view of each student and they each had a clear view of me. After the professional performance workshop, I gathered three separate binders and labeled them *teaching*, *scholarship* and *service* so that I can place documentation in each as I develop lesson plans, complete research projects and participate in events. While it may not be possible to include everything learned from the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) activities, I think that it is important to review what is most helpful to you and to use it accordingly.

As I look ahead to my second year, I plan to continue utilizing the resources provided through the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) by building on networking opportunities, specifically focusing on teaching, scholarship, and service. I have connected with colleagues within and outside of Hampton University about collaborating on activities relating to research and service. In addition, I am currently working on two presentations for professional conferences in the fall, and I will be assisting a colleague with a research project this summer. I have also created several community service opportunities that will be integrated into my classes for the next academic year. In closing, I feel as though I have been prepared for, and now know, what is required of me in order to maintain the Hampton University “Standard of Excellence.”

Using Cumulative Exams to Help Students Revisit, Review, and Retain Course Content

By Maryellen Weimer, Ph.D., from *facultyfocus.com*

The evidence that students retain content longer and can apply it better when exams and finals are cumulative is compelling. When I pointed to the evidence in a recent workshop, a faculty member responded, "But I can't use cumulative exams. My students would

revolt." Students don't like cumulative exams for the very reason we should be using them: they force regular, repeated encounters with the content. And it's those multiple interactions with the material that move learning from memorization to understanding. Another reason students object is that they don't know how to study for long-term retention, but there are things we can do to help. With regular, short review activities in class or online we can encourage them to regularly reconnect with content covered previously. Here are some examples.

Use previous or potential test questions. *Display a question at the beginning of the session.* "Here's a test question I've asked previously about cognitive dissonance. How would you answer it?" Then give them time to talk with each other. Have them look in their notes. It's a great way to get students to discover whether they have any helpful material in their notes that relates to the question. Furthermore, test questions keep students engaged and attentive until they're answered, especially if several possible answers are proposed and discussed. *As a wrap-up exercise, have students create a possible test question.* "This material on self-efficacy is fair game for the exam. What might a test question about it ask? How about jotting down some ideas." Then ask several students to propose possible questions and identify those that are good. With a bit of editorial polish, create a question from one of their suggestions use it at the beginning or end of a session the following week. And, if one those student suggested questions ends up on the test, that pretty much guarantees that students will take this activity seriously. *Let students propose potential test questions.* Encourage students to submit possible test questions. Those that are good get posted (without the answer) and the author gets a bonus point. Maybe one or two of those show up on the exam. Getting students involved in creating test questions makes them think about questions, not just answers and this student-generated test bank can be used for review across the course.

Regularly, in every class or whenever you're online with a class, make a habit of asking questions about previous material. A few guidelines to this approach: Resolutely refuse to answer the questions yourself. That's exactly what students want you to do. Ignore their looks of confusion and claims that they don't have a clue. Give them a hint. "We talked about mindset when we were talking about motivation. Check your notes for October 20. You might find the answer there." Be patient. It takes time to retrieve what you've just learned and barely understand. Still no response? Tell them, that's the question you'll start with next session and if they don't have an answer then, that's a potential exam question for sure.

Have students do short reviews of previous material. There are lots of good times to do this—at the beginning of class, in the middle when they might need a break, or as a way to end the session. On April 2 say, "Let's all look at our notes from March 3. You've got two minutes to underline three things in your notes that you're going to need to review for the exam." Let them share underlines with someone nearby and then facilitate a short class discussion. This confronts students who don't have notes for the day with the fact they may need some. Late in November say, "Take three minutes to review your notes from November 1. Do you have anything in those notes that doesn't make sense to you now?" Encourage other students to respond to what others have identified. "Help Shandra out. What do you the rest of you have in your notes about this?" Conclude by encouraging them to write more in their notes if they need to. OR try this, "Your friend Leo wasn't in class last Tuesday. He texts, asking what happened in class. Text Leo a short answer and don't tell him 'nothing'." "If students are regularly encountering previous content in the course that makes studying for cumulative exams easier. It also highlights relationships and coherence between content chunks.

How Assignment Design Shapes Student Learning

By Maryellen Weimer, Ph.D., from *facultyfocus.com*

The design of assignments, that is, the actions required to complete them, shapes the learning that results. We know this, but do we make the most of what we know when we design and select assignments?

I'll try to make the point with writing assignments. We have come a long ways since the days when term papers were the gold standard of writing assignments. Paper options now include authentic assignments that approximate professional writing tasks. The Writing-Across-the-Curriculum movement has introduced us to low-stakes writing activities from students jotting down a few ideas before they speak, to free writing that starts the flow of ideas, to journals that encourage personal connections with course materials. Technology adds still more assignment design options. Students can blog and respond to posts; they can write collaboratively on wikis and Google Docs. The options are many, but the features of each writing assignment directly shape the learning that results.

A recent issue of *Teaching Sociology* contains a well-designed study that illustrates the power of even small design details. The author compares more than 1,000 journal entries and over 1,000 blog posts written in multiple sections of an introductory sociology course. The blog posts were read by classmates; the journal entries by the instructors. The author wanted "to clarify the effect of peer readership on reflective writing practices by way of a direct comparison of the learning outcomes associated with private journals and public blog posts." (p. 106)

What he found (with an interesting research design) wasn't terribly surprising. The assignments accomplished different learning outcomes. "Students appear to be overall more likely to take greater *intellectual risks* in blogs, which they know will be read and commented on by their peers. Conversely, journals—the more private option—compel students to be vulnerable and take more *personal risks* in their reflections." (p. 111) By intellectual risks, he means that in the blogs students were more likely to take positions on issues or propose an explanatory theory. In journals students were more likely to compare multiple readings, link course material to personal experience, and acknowledge their misconceptions. "This research has shown that neither private journals nor public blogs produce definitively higher quality reflections from students. Instead, each is more likely to elicit different forms of productive reflection." We can more effectively shape learning outcomes if we start with objectives that force us to get specific about what we want students to know and be able to do. Most of us write objectives for the course approval processes and they appear on many of our syllabi, but are they front and center when we make assignment decisions? If not, we can come at this from the other direction, like the study does. We can look at the products produced by the assignment to make some determinations about what and how students are learning. I can hear some being adamant that the better way to start is with objectives, and that may be right. I'd rather be adamant about all of us understanding the relationship between assignment design and the learning that results.

Writing assignments are the example here, but every kind of assignment influences the shape of learning. So, what would you say about how you've constructed exam experiences in your courses? Are they shaping learning in the ways you want? I once observed an instructor who, on the first day of class, asked students, "Are you worried about what's going to be on the final?" Heads nodded. "Well, no worries in this course. You'll find the final attached to the syllabus." It was a page of essay questions. "You'll be writing responses to some of those questions on the final and we'll be dealing with content throughout the course that you can be using in your answers." Would that approach change the way students take notes throughout the semester? Would it enable instructors to ask a different kind of exam question? Would students prepare for the final differently? What's the shape of learning that results from your assignments?

Reference: Foster, D. (2015). Private journals versus public blogs: The impact of peer readership on low-stakes reflective writing. *Teaching Sociology*, 43 (2), 104-114.

Announcements

2015 Institute on General Education and Assessment

June 2, 2015 to June 6, 2015

University of Central Oklahoma

100 North University Drive

Edmond, OK 73034

About the Institute The Institute on General Education and Assessment celebrates its 25th year in 2015. The Institute continues to provide campus teams with opportunities to refine and advance general education programs and their assessment. The rapidly changing composition and circumstances of our students and faculty compels all of us to expand our cultural understandings, organizational constructs, digital creativity, and pedagogical approaches in order to create learning communities that meet the needs and support success for all our students. During the Institute, teams explore intentional, well-defined, and meaningfully assessed models of general education; processes of redesign; and the implementation of highly effective practices aligned with the Essential Learning Outcomes. Drawing on the past twenty-five years of campus work, this year we are introducing a new set of Principles and Guidelines for redesigning and evaluating general education programs, curricula, and pedagogy through which students can develop the 21st-century knowledge and skills necessary for work, life, and responsible citizenship. AAC&U also is announcing The LEAP Challenge, which has direct implications for revitalizing general education and assessment. Admission to the Institute is competitive and limited. All regionally accredited two-year and four-year institutions are encouraged and eligible to apply.

Who Should Attend The Institute on General Education and Assessment is designed for any campus, system, or group of campuses engaged in redesigning general education for students. Campuses can be at any stage in the process of rethinking general education approaches and issues emerging from their

respective needs and circumstances. Campus teams should include a senior academic officer and faculty members working on general education committees or teaching general education courses. Team members can include student affairs professionals and also assessment and curriculum specialists with active roles in advancing student learning on campus.

Questions may be directed to Mankaa Ngwa-Suh at ngwa-suh@aacu.org at (202) 387-3760 ext. 413.

2015 Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success
June 9, 2015 to June 13, 2015
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Campus Drive
Madison, WI 53706

About the Institute The Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success is designed to help campuses and systems make institution-wide changes that benefit *all* students. It is ideal for institutions at various stages of work, and it addresses ambitious goals for improving both completion rates and the quality of student learning. Participant teams work on removing barriers to student success and devising integrative learning-centered plans—making intentional and evidence-based use of Essential Learning Outcomes and high-impact practices. Highlighting the success of students who have historically been underserved, the program supports work to make excellence inclusive and to recognize and nurture the assets students bring to college. It provides insight into building and scaling up student success initiatives at the institutional level. The Institute draws on research documenting how all students can benefit from high-impact practices and highlights the value of such practices for students who have not been given access to high-impact learning. The Institute curriculum aims to help campuses define approaches that are highly engaging to students and effective at improving the equitable achievement of outcomes.

Who Should Attend Teams typically consists of a team leader and four team members. Team leaders are most often senior academic or student affairs officers. Teams should be diverse and cross-functional, including faculty from a variety of disciplines. Teams should recruit individuals from various sectors of campus that will be significantly involved in the projected campus work, as well as key individuals who could extend the reach of action. In the past, teams have included faculty, provosts, deans, department chairs, student affairs educators, registrars, librarians, and students. For more information about the institute and the application process, please contact Alex Belknap at belknap@aacu.org

**2015 PKAL Summer Leadership Institute for STEM Faculty
July 1, 2015 to July 30, 2015
Multiple Dates and Locations
Crestone, CO and Adamstown, MD**

Institute I: July 14 – July 19, 2015

Institute II: July 21 – July 26, 2015

The Claggett Center, Adamstown, Maryland

Institute III: July 25-30, 2015

The Baca Campus of Colorado College, Crestone, Colorado

The PKAL Summer Leadership Institute is designed for both early and mid-career STEM faculty engaged in leading projects aimed at transforming undergraduate STEM education in their classrooms, departments, and institutions. The five-day intensive Institute provides faculty participants with the theory and practice required to effectively manage the politics of such change and contribute to the national STEM higher education reform effort. PKAL has been offering Summer Leadership Institutes since 1996. Currently, over 40 percent of Institute alumni hold positions of leadership on their home campus. Institutes will be held this year at Claggett Center, a retreat and conference center overlooking the fields of Sugarloaf Valley near Frederick, Maryland and at the Baca Campus of Colorado College in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. All of the Institutes are identical in format and programming, consisting of a team of nine who are nationally recognized leaders in STEM higher education. Institute mentors play a key role in guiding the Institute, contributing first-hand experience in institutional change leadership at the local and national levels. Mentors work with participants during the Institute to shape a personal agenda for leadership, and develop an action plan for either an ongoing or new undergraduate STEM initiative at either the campus or national level. As such, significant time is allotted for informal conversation and reflection with mentors. Additionally, the Institute strategically utilizes a combination of introspection and experiential learning—along with a variety of other approaches that include, but are not limited to case studies, role-playing, and collaborative problem-solving exercises—in order to empower a cadre of leaders who are equipped to:

Lead Change with Courage;
Embrace Diverse Perspectives with Authenticity; and
Communicate Bold, New Ideas with Thoughtfulness and Clarity

Specifically, Institute participants can expect to:

- Explore practical and tactical leadership skills for directing campus-based and national undergraduate STEM reform initiatives;
- Engage in rigorous discourse about national and regional opportunities and challenges related to STEM higher education;
- Learn from experienced mentors about the political dimensions of institutional change, the importance of understanding institutional culture, and the changing national context for STEM leadership;
- Practice the art of successful communication and negotiation;
- Learn about communication styles and develop an appreciation of how differences in communication styles, experiences, and backgrounds contribute to enhanced problem solving;
- Reflect privately, and with mentors and peers, on being an agent of change for STEM higher education at the institutional and national levels;
- Create a leadership growth plan, with guidance from mentors that outlines the vision, goals and strategies to effect change; and
- Join a network of colleagues from around the country who share similar goals regarding the creation of effective learning environments for all STEM learners.

Emerging STEM faculty leaders from all institution types, especially community colleges and minority serving institutions, are encouraged to apply. ***STEM faculty from historically underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.***

Related Large Project(s):
Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL)
