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3M Canada and the STLHE: 3M National Teaching Fellows Awarded at McMaster University

Marie Vander Kloet - *Educational Consultant, CLL*

It is with great pride that we acknowledge the awarding of the 3M National Teaching Fellows to two members of the McMaster University community, **Marshall Beier**, from the Department of Political Science and **Susan Vajoczki**, Associate Professor in the School of Geography and Earth Sciences and Director of the Centre for Leadership in Learning.

The **3M National Teaching Fellows** were established 27 years ago with the **Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education** to recognize and acknowledge outstanding achievements and contributions made by teacher-scholars in Canada to teaching excellence and educational leadership (stlhe.ca/awards). Each year, a maximum of 10 awards are given across Canada. To have two teachers acknowledged at McMaster University is exciting and encouraging – it is an opportunity for us to celebrate our peers' accomplishments and feel revitalized in our work towards pursuing creativity and excellence in teaching and learning.

Marshall Beier is acknowledged by his students to be exceptional and his previous nominations and receipt of teaching awards reflect this. Beier's vision of teaching is not simply to impart or deliver knowledge to students but to invite them into the research process (an experience that is sometimes reserved for graduate students and faculty). By perceiving and working with undergraduate students as knowledge producers, Beier is able to weave teaching and research together in ways that are mutually beneficial – by bringing the 'un-askable' questions of his students to research in his field and returning to the classroom with new and exciting knowledge from current research.

Susan Vajoczki believes that support for, and experimentation in, teaching is essential to teaching excellence. In her role as the Director of the Centre for Leadership in Learning, where she is tasked with guiding the centre to provide support for teachers across the university and to encourage and sustain scholarly research on teaching and learning, she observes that we are fortunate at McMaster to have the support for innovation in education. Vajoczki's own teaching practices have long been praised by students and peers – she demonstrates a commitment to research-informed teaching practice and participates in scholarly conversations about teaching on campus as well as in national and international communities. Vajoczki's enthusiasm for teaching translates into her commitment to educational leadership; her approach and passion risk influencing and exciting us to explore and examine our teaching in new ways.

Alongside 3M Canada and the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, we wish to celebrate with Marshall Beier and Sue Vajoczki, to support their future work and to share in their excitement for what is possible as we head to our classrooms.



Marshall Beier



Susan Vajoczki

SOTL News

International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (ISSOTL) Conference 2012

Beth Marquis - *Educational Research Consultant, CLL*

The Centre for Leadership in Learning is honoured to be hosting the **2012 International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (ISSOTL) Conference on October 24th - 27th, 2012**. ISSOTL is an international professional and scholarly society devoted to fostering and disseminating research on teaching and learning in higher education, serving, as noted on the Society website, "faculty members, staff, and students who care about teaching and learning as serious intellectual work" (www.issotl.org). The society's annual conference is a major part of this mission, bringing together approximately 500 scholars and educators from around the world to share recent findings, to generate fresh ideas, and to form new connections and collaborations each year.

This year's conference, to be hosted by the CLL at the **Hamilton Convention Centre** and the **Sheraton Hamilton Hotel**, will continue this tradition, enhancing teaching and learning by creating a context for conversation and exchange between teaching and learning scholars from a range of disciplines, institutions, and countries. Building from the focus of our annual regional Research on Teaching and Learning conference (described elsewhere in this issue), the theme of this year's meeting will be "Integrating Practices." We view this theme as an especially rich one, encompassing several potential topics or threads, including (but not limited to):

- Integrating the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SOTL) into institutional cultures
- Integrating student voices in the theory & practice of SOTL
- Integrating SOTL research results and classroom teaching practices
- Integrating diverse disciplinary approaches to teaching, learning & SOTL
- Integrating theory & practice in SOTL
- Integrating diverse, international perspectives on and practices of SOTL
- Integrating leadership, academic development & SOTL
- Integrating professional learning & higher education

The program, to be organized around these threads, will feature workshops facilitated by leading scholars in the field, distinguished international plenary speakers, panel presentations, individual paper and poster presentations, and

ISSOTL's signature Conference Commons for informal idea-sharing and networking. We sincerely encourage you to consider submitting your research on teaching and learning work for inclusion in the conference. The deadline for submissions is **March 25, 2012**. Further information, including the full call for proposals, can be found at <http://issotl12.com/call-for-proposals/>.

A new feature at this year's conference will be the incorporation of international collaborative writing groups. These groups, which will include faculty and students from a range of disciplines and countries, will work together during 2012-13 to collaboratively author an article on a pre-selected topic about SOTL for submission for publication. They will work at a distance to prepare a 2000 word outline for discussion running up to the conference, and will then meet face-to-face in Hamilton for the two days preceding the start of the main conference (October 22 & 23, 2012) to spend time preparing their draft paper and discussing their work with members of other groups. Following the workshop, the groups will have two months to complete and send in their papers for submission to an international SOTL journal. For more information about this initiative, please see: <http://issotl12.com/collaborative-writing-groups/>.

Building on the successful meetings held prior to the ISSOTL conferences in Liverpool (2010) and Milwaukee (2011), the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) will also be offering a pre-conference symposium at the ISSOTL 2012 conference. This session, which will be held on Wednesday, October 24, will be devoted to international discussion of strategies and opportunities for engaging undergraduate students in meaningful research. Registrants in the CUR session will receive a discount toward their ISSOTL registration. Further details will be available shortly at: <http://issotl12.com/cur-workshop/>.

Given this diverse and exciting collection of features, we feel certain that this year's conference will be a unique and stimulating experience for members of the teaching and learning community at McMaster and beyond. We sincerely hope you will be able to join us. We look forward to meeting or to re-connecting with you, and to many enriching and exciting conversations!

SAVE THE DATE!

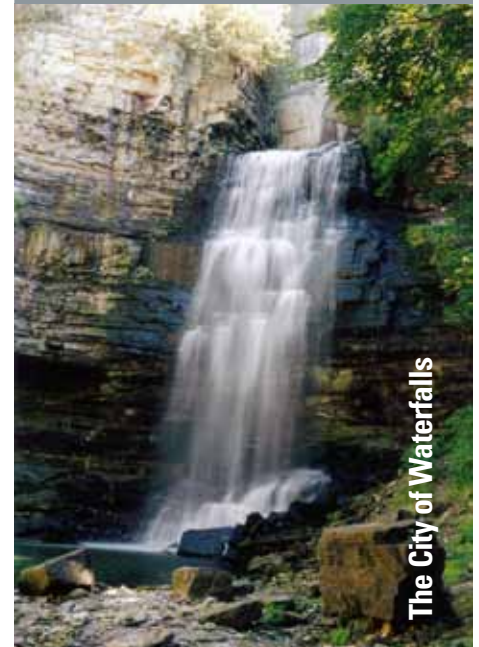
International Society for the
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
(ISSOTL) Conference

October 24th - 27th, 2012

Hamilton Convention Centre &
Sheraton Hamilton Hotel
Hamilton, ON

Hosted by the Centre for Leadership in
Learning at McMaster University

For more information see: <http://issotl12.com>
or contact: issotl12@mcmaster.ca



For further information about the conference, please visit <http://issotl12.com>. If you would like to become involved as a proposal reviewer or a conference volunteer, please contact Beth Marquis (marquie@mcmaster.ca) or Samantha Applewhaite (clevents@mcmaster.ca). If you would like to discuss ideas for a paper, poster, panel or workshop proposal, please contact Beth Marquis (marquie@mcmaster.ca).

Teaching and Learning Celebrations

Arts & Science Program Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Jean Wilson - Director, Arts & Science Program

The interdisciplinary Arts & Science Program marked its 30th anniversary with a lively weekend celebration on September 23-25, 2011. Festivities began on the Friday evening with a capacity crowd in the Great Hall of the University Club, and continued throughout Saturday, with a morning networking session, an afternoon forum on interdisciplinary education, time for outdoor recreation, and a gala dinner, which honoured founding Program Director Dr. Herb Jenkins. The weekend ended with an Open House in the Arts & Science Program office in C-105, a small but important space which is open to students 24/7, and where they can indeed be found at all hours of the day and night, working in close interaction as part of an ever-evolving community of learning.

groups, tasked with exploring questions of the value of interdisciplinary study. Led by current Director Dr. Jean Wilson and alum Dr. Johanna Weststar, the forum exemplified the commitment to social awareness and social engagement that is a hallmark of the Arts & Science Program.

Several initiatives emerged from the gathering, including a new course to be introduced in the fall, "Alumni Experience Inquiry," which centres on experiential education and community engagement. As a whole, the weekend activities provided abundant evidence of what educator Northrop Frye characterized as "a participating community, which is constantly in process and constantly engaged in criticizing its own

assumptions and clarifying the vision of what it might and could be."



Herb Jenkins, former Director of the Arts & Science Program and Jean Wilson, current Director of the Arts & Science Program.



Herb Jenkins, first Director of the Arts & Science Program and Joanna Chan, Arts & Science Program student.

On the Friday evening, Arts & Science alumni from across the country mingled with a large contingent of current students, faculty members, and staff at a reception that featured "milk 'n cookies," a longstanding Artsci tradition, and led into a seriously playful student/professor/alumni debate, focused on what historical figure best exemplifies the spirit of Arts & Science. The debate was hosted by alum David Sandomierski, who currently co-teaches, with fellow Artsci graduate Sven Poysa, an upper level course, "Legal Inquiry," a recently developed seminar that is challenging and in great demand, as students gather to engage with two instructors who know from experience where an inquiry-driven, interdisciplinary education might lead.

This very question, what the "good" of an Arts & Science education might be, provided the focus of the well-attended and robust afternoon forum on interdisciplinary education, which followed a "world café" format of rotating table

Teaching with Technology

16th Annual Learning Technologies Symposium: Go Explore, Be Inspired, Build Connections

Muriel McKay - Project Developer, CLL

April 11th and 12th, 2012 marks the 16th annual **Learning Technologies Symposium (LTS)** hosted by CLL and the 4th LTS collaboration with RIVET, the Learning Technologies Division of Faculty of Health Science Program for Faculty Development.

The symposium is an opportunity for faculty, instructors, students and staff interested in exchanging ideas and learning more about learning technologies at McMaster, to connect.

The format and configuration of the symposium changes annually; this year we are incorporating a "Doors Open" section that provides registrants the opportunity to visit a variety of technology-enabled teaching spaces on campus. In addition to demonstrations and presentations on how and why a particular technology is used in teaching, there will be discussion of practitioners' successes, challenges and best practices.

Over two days, sessions are planned in various labs, rooms and theatres including the Theatre and Film Studies studio space, the Elliptical Engineering computer lab, FHS Patient Simulation Centre, Lyons New Media Centre, Kinesiology labs, Wong E-classroom, CLL Teaching Commons and many more locations. Session topics will include:

- Using tablets/iPads for in-class teaching,
- Lecture capture options and comparison,
- Using iClickers in-class,
- Hosting "virtual" guest speakers in class (or online),
- Advanced Avenue to Learn features such as using widgets to broaden your resource base.

Registration, along with networking breaks and lunches, will be hosted in the CLL main office in Mills Library. The full program and online registration will be available at cll.mcmaster.ca/events. A Twitter feed, [@McMasterLTS](https://twitter.com/McMasterLTS), will be used for program updates. (Not familiar with Twitter? We'll have a session to introduce you to it!).

Please contact mckay@mcmaster.ca or cll@mcmaster.ca for more information about participating in LTS 2012. We look forward to meeting you there.

Partnerships

McMaster Seminar on Higher Education: Practice, Policy, and Public Life

Lori Goff - *Educational Consultant, CLL*

This past fall, President Patrick Deane announced a new lecture series designed to encourage dialogue and inspire critical thought on higher education. The **McMaster Seminar on Higher Education: Practice, Policy, and Public Life** focuses on topics that are interdisciplinary and guided by the key questions and challenges facing higher education institutions and the communities they serve. Christopher Newfield (University of California at Santa Barbara) opened the series in November with a thought-provoking lecture on rebuilding the university in the face of growing financial pressure. In January, Andrew Furco (University of Minnesota) initiated conversations on community engagement. In February, a panel discussion amongst McMaster's President's Award for Teaching and Learning winners, Ann Herring, Sheila Sammon, Patty Solomon and Jean Wilson, examined the possibilities and critical questions that surround community engaged learning.

David Theo Goldberg (University of California) presents the next installment of the lecture series on 'The Afterlife of the Humanities' on March 15 and a panel discussion on 'Student Learning, Instructor Experience and International Learning Opportunities' will be held on April 10.



Christopher Newfield,
University of California at Santa Barbara.

Community Engaged Learning: McMaster Seminar on Higher Education

Erin Aspenlieder - *Postdoctoral Fellow, CLL*

The third installment of the **McMaster Seminar on Higher Education** took place on Monday, February 6th with four distinguished faculty members speaking on the topic of community-engaged learning. The panellists – Ann Herring (Anthropology), Shelia Sammon (Social Work), Patty Soloman (Rehabilitation Science) and Jean Wilson (Arts and Science) and moderator Sue Baptiste (Rehabilitation Science) spoke first about what constitutes a “community,” and suggested that “community” ought not to be a defined set of people, or a defined place, but instead as an ever-shifting constituency wherein individuals might belong to multiple, competing and/or overlapping communities of place, identity and position.

Given this porous idea of what constitutes community, the panellists discussed the many possibilities for the university to engage with communities from classroom book projects to development initiatives. Possibilities for engagement tended to fall in the areas of “research,” “service,” or “creation,” with the panellists curious about other modes of community engagement. All of the panellists agreed that community-engaged learning succeeded in helping students develop meaningful understanding of course concepts and materials, and that they themselves benefited tremendously from the energy and enthusiasm of their students who engaged in these “real world” learning experiences.

The panellists also persuasively argued for some underlying principles to guide any and all of the possible community-engaged learning initiatives. These principles included the requirement of reciprocity in any engagement such that the university does not impose a project on the community, but rather works with the community to identify an existing need, to discuss how a collaborative endeavour might benefit both the community and students, and to agree on a sustainable framework for the engagement such that either the project was limited to the time of student involvement or the project could continue after student participation ended.

The discussion of sustainability also included a conversation about how to ensure initiatives from individual faculty could be maintained over time within the institutional framework. The panellists observed that meaningful, lasting and reciprocal community-engaged learning can demand a lot of time to establish, and that to be sustainable there must be administrative and institutional support in terms of reward and recognition and in terms of encouraging faculty, Departments and Faculties to continue to invest the time and resources in these projects.

Inspired by the call for creative pedagogy in President Patrick Deane's “Forward with Integrity” letter the audience asked questions of panellists and of one another, suggesting ideas ranging from a compulsory first year course on community to the creation of a Hamilton handbook. We might then expect that as more community-engaged learning develops in the coming years that the McMaster community will continue to develop imaginative ways to extend, expand and explode what “McMaster community” might mean in ways that are guided by principles of reciprocity and sustainability.



Andrew Furco,
University of Minnesota.

SOTL News

CLL Holds Annual Research on Teaching & Learning Conference

Beth Marquis - *Educational Research Consultant, CLL*

On December 7th & 8th, 2011, the Centre for Leadership in Learning held its second annual **Research on Teaching and Learning: Integrating Practices** Conference. This yearly event brings together faculty, students, staff, and administrators across disciplines and institutions to promote evidence-informed teaching practices through the sharing of research on teaching and learning.

The program for this year featured short & long papers, panels, interactive workshops, and poster presentations, showcasing the work of nearly 90 new and experienced scholars of teaching and learning from 16 colleges and universities in Canada and the United States. These individuals engaged just less than 200 conference attendees in sessions on a range of interesting topics, from training teaching assistants, teaching large classes, and using mobile technologies in the classroom, to developing assignments that foster deep learning, promoting academic rigour, and integrating active learning opportunities into large courses. Presenters also took up issues such as evaluating online programs, teaching the writing process, developing meaningful library-instructor collaborations, and teaching and learning in interdisciplinary contexts. Lunch breaks in the new Centre for Leadership in Learning Teaching Commons and a wine and cheese reception provided ample opportunities for attendees to continue the discussions initiated by these sessions, and to share new ideas, in an open and informal context.

The conference also featured two provocative and stimulating plenary presentations. The first of these, 'A Cognitive Perspective on How People Learn: Implications for Teaching', was given by Dr. Geoff Norman, Canada Research Chair in Cognitive Dimensions of Clinical Expertise and Assistant Dean of the Programme for Educational Research and Development (PERD) at McMaster University. In this session, Dr. Norman, winner of the prestigious Karolinska Institutet Prize for his achievements in medical education research, argued that the improvement of teaching is tied inextricably to an understanding of how people learn. As such, he presented a range of practical insights derived from cognitive psychology research that attendees across disciplines might integrate into their teaching practices in order to enhance their students' learning.

The second keynote address, 'Cultivating Synergies: Integrating Teaching Knowledge, Systematic Inquiry into Practice, and Scholarly Imagination,' was provided by Dr. K. Lynn Taylor, Director of the Centre for Learning & Teaching at Dalhousie University, and past Vice President, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning of the Society for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). In this session, Dr. Taylor engaged the conference focus on integration in a different manner, challenging attendees to consider what it would take to enable and sustain the meaningful integration of diverse disciplinary perspectives on and practices of teaching, learning and inquiry. Participants' active engagement in the session suggested they were keen to rise to this challenge.



Photo: Evelyn Chan

Keynote address with Lynn Taylor, Director, Centre for Learning and Teaching, Dalhousie University.

In his welcoming remarks, Dr. Mo Elbestawi, McMaster's Vice-President, Research & International Affairs, remarked, "it is imperative that we continue to build new knowledge about teaching and learning through research, to share and refine that knowledge, and to use it to make evidence-informed teaching decisions that ultimately improve student learning." We were thrilled, at this year's conference, to work together with all of the attendees and presenters on precisely these significant tasks.

Education 750: Principles & Practices of University Teaching

Tuesdays

May 8 - July 31, 2012

9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

CLL Teaching Commons Classroom
Mills Library Room 504/X

Instructors: **Catherine Swanson**
Teal McAteer

Due to popular demand, this Graduate Credit Course will be offered again during the Spring/Summer session. The course, which is open to graduate students and postdoctoral researchers across the campus, focuses on skills and scholarship of post-secondary teaching and learning. It offers an introduction to the literature and an opportunity to practice teaching skills through interactive workshops and the development of a course design. Interested students should sign up on SOLAR. Questions can be directed to ccl@mcmaster.ca.

SAVE THE DATE!

Learning Technologies Symposium

April 11th - 12th, 2012

The Symposium is an opportunity to connect McMaster faculty, instructors, staff and students interested in exchanging ideas and learning more about learning technologies at McMaster.

This annual symposium is hosted by CLL in collaboration with RIVET, the learning technologies division of the Program for Faculty Development.

Register now at: ccl.mcmaster.ca/events

Signature Pedagogies

Critical Writing Pedagogy: Level I Writing Pilot in English and Cultural Studies

Melissa Carroll - *PhD Candidate, English and Cultural Studies*

Melinda Gough - *Associate Professor, English and Cultural Studies*

Teaching writing is generally not a practice that gets university professors and teaching assistants excited. The same might be said of undergraduate student sentiment towards learning writing skills and techniques. From the instructional side, barriers to effective undergraduate instruction in writing include overworked TAs and professors coupled with a pressure to cover serious intellectual “content,” as well as feelings of frustration surrounding seemingly out-of-date, irrelevant, or expensive teaching materials. Combined with student malaise and anxiety around writing, such conditions make it difficult to foster an environment for engaged and engaging writing pedagogy. Given larger and larger class sizes, professors do not and cannot read and mark a great deal of undergraduate student writing. But we cannot assume that graduate tutorial leaders, without mentoring, guidance, and appropriate materials, can on their own shoulder the university’s burden for critical writing pedagogy. There is much to do to ensure both that the teaching of writing at McMaster continues, despite and through fiscally-related pedagogical restraints, and that our writing pedagogies on the ground incorporate exciting new research on how writing works in teaching and learning to foster not only academic skill but also civic engagement — for not only undergraduate learners but also their (graduate student and faculty) instructors.

The Level I Writing Pilot offered in the English and Cultural Studies Department has been running for three years now, with over 1,200 undergraduate student participants. Designed to better address student writing problems — issues identified through multiple surveys of undergraduates, teaching assistants, and faculty members — our pilot concentrates on teaching effective communication, persuasive argumentation, and critical reading and analysis in the context of large Level I English and Cultural Studies courses (with enrollments from 144 to 290 students). Being an interdisciplinary department we negotiate the tensions between literary critical approaches and cultural studies discourses daily, and we actively explore ways in which to enhance writing skills among a student body with diverse academic preparations and disciplinary expectations.

One of our challenges has been trying to negotiate more politically conscious methods of composition instruction alongside a pedagogical imperative that understands the teaching of writing as more instrumentalist. In other words, while historically writing has been taught in ways that focus attention primarily on academic skills, or on skills that will be useful in the workforce, today’s students, particularly in English and Cultural Studies classrooms, are starting to ask how writing may itself be a political act, one that engages with the world we live in both inside and outside the university. Our graduate TAs, moreover, are invested in participating in ethical education practices that do something in the world; they want to foster academic skills through teaching but also desire teaching pedagogies that foster conversations about immediately pertinent social and political issues.

To better respond to this call for engaged writing pedagogy, our pilot over three years has increasingly focused on mandatory structured writing workshops in the small group tutorial space. Drawing on teaching and learning research, we have developed the materials for these workshops ourselves, tying writing exercises to examples from course-specific readings and honing in on essay writing as a way to exercise critical analysis and effective, persuasive communication. Our working hypothesis is that tutorial-based peer review and writing exercises that encourage drafting papers multiple times can begin to address writing anxieties and foster writing skills by requiring students to workshop their writing in person — with a live

audience. By engaging students as readers of one another’s prose, peer review can help students to learn what clear and effective argumentation, organization, and communication of ideas looks like (or fails to look like), and to begin seeing themselves as writers. We hope that TAs too, by facilitating guided and structured critical writing pedagogy workshops for undergraduates, will develop new understandings of how teaching critically engaged writing can fruitfully impact their own writing practices as researchers and activists. Ultimately, the insights we have gained from the pilot thus far indicate a need for more visible and more concerted mentorship around critical writing instruction, in our department and beyond.

Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are groups of people who share a set of interests or a passion about a topic, and who increase their knowledge in this area through discussion and shared experiences. Communities of Practice create a body of shared expertise and promote best practices.

There are currently 10 Communities of Practice: **Accessibility, Community Engagement, Instructional & Curricular Support Staff** (formerly, Instructional Assistants CoP), **Interactive Teaching and Peer Instruction, Level 1 Instructors, Pedagogy, Teaching Professors, Teaching with Technology, Writing, and Research on Teaching and Learning.**

If you would like more information regarding a Community of Practice (either joining an existing community or establishing a new one), please contact the chair(s) or Kris Knorr at extension 24539 (knorrk@mcmaster.ca). Community of Practice chairs’ contacts can be found at: <http://ccl.mcmaster.ca/cop>.

Signature Pedagogies

Student Designed Learning in New Media

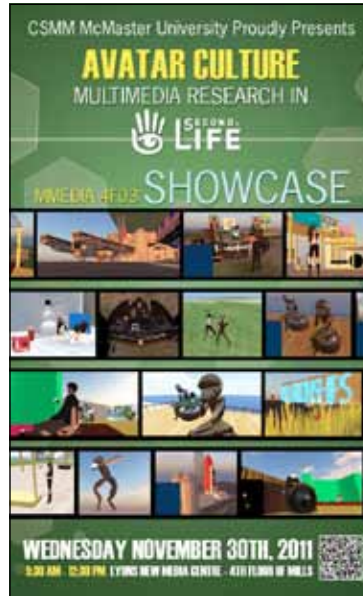
David Harris Smith - Assistant Professor, Communication Studies and Multimedia

Learning challenges in new media undergraduate education arise due to the diversity of the field of professional practice, changing technologies and applications, and the multiplication of specialized sub-disciplines. Students enter the McMaster undergraduate program in Multimedia with varying skill levels, unequal preparation, differing career objectives, and diverse, often conflicting, expectations of course and program outcomes. These challenges surpass the traditional conflicts between the skills and technology competencies orientation of college programs and the theory and practice orientation of university undergraduate degrees in new media. The relative merits of these educational paradigms in this competitive dialectic have, at least, commonly assumed a stable career identity and constant professional milieu. This assumption is no longer valid, and new media educators in both college and university programs are challenged to devise instructional environments appropriate to a diversified entrepreneurial new media economy.

I encountered these challenges as I struggled to devise learning activities in new media design and research for students whose educational goals demonstrated little overlap. What are the 'fundamentals of design' (my course title) to a game designer versus a package designer versus a brand designer versus a filmmaker versus a DJ? What essential skills and intellectual development must take place to prepare new media students for career entry into a field that is characterized by technological paradigm shifts, just-in-time skills acquisition, peer knowledge networks, and user content creation?

My goal as a mentor to developing new media artists is to deliver an instructional environment that more closely matches the conditions of this emergent new media culture. The growing significance of peer knowledge networks and user content creation led me to review the literature on student-designed learning. By combining the approaches of learner-centered pedagogy (Loacker, Cromwell, & O'Brien, 1986; Mazur, 1997; Weimer, 2002) and backward-design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Wiggins, 2006), students enrolled in my Fall 2011 Multimedia studio courses became designers of their learning. I was curious to discover whether these approaches would lead to an increase in student motivation and engagement in learning activity, and whether these approaches would

lead to an increase in the cultural relevance of course learning goals.



Promotional poster for final project presentation from Multimedia.

My role as course director was to coach and guide students through the three key stages of backward-design: goal setting, defining assessment, and designing learning activities. Peer learning motivations, which were orchestrated by group defined project assignments, learning activities, and assessment rubrics, augmented these student designed learning processes. In both courses social media sites were used by student groups to self organize and communicate. These media forums reduced scheduling conflicts that typically make face-to-face group meetings difficult to organize. Most importantly, the media forums allowed me to 'crowd source' learning activities beyond the classroom; the site activity feeds provide countless examples of questions posted and answers provided, with little intervention on my part.

Culminating student showcases at the Lyons New Media Centre in Mills Library provided the students with a tangible goal for their completed course work. At these events, students engaged the public with prepared presentations of their work. My impression, reinforced by those who attended the showcases, was that the students displayed a sense of pride in their accomplished coursework - an accomplishment that was self-designed and socially

situated. Students displayed high levels of motivation, most exceeding outcomes typical of undergraduate level assignments. They also introduced diverse and interesting new media formats to the course, formats that exceeded my own scope of practice and expertise in new media arts.

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CLL Teaching & Learning Grants

Next Deadline: July 1st, 2012

Submissions of grants of up to \$1,000 are accepted 3 times per year on February 1st, July 1st and November 1st. CLL also distributes large grants of up to \$10,000 annually, with a submission deadline of February 1st.

The purpose of the teaching and learning grants is to fund projects that improve the quality of students' learning.

For more information, visit:

http://cll.mcmaster.ca/awards_and_grants/grants.html

Signature Pedagogies

Inquiry as Interaction

Carl Cuneo - Professor Emeritus, Sociology

Inquiry is the art or science of asking questions. Once students ask questions, they expect a response and feedback from peers and instructors. This immediately places at the centre stage of inquiry the role of interaction – among peers, and between students and instructors – one of the seven principles of undergraduate education outlined by Chickering and Gamson (1987).

Much of the research on student learning in Inquiry shows the popularity of interaction as a preferred learning method among students. In the Social Sciences at McMaster University, several surveys of students have consistently ranked an in-class hands-on learning simulation of inter-cultural communication (Bafa Bafa) and in-class peer-to-peer discussion as the two top choices by students among a list of 15 to 20 learning events or incidents. Students arguably learn best by interaction because they can test their tentative questions and ideas on other students and instructors. The feedback can challenge students' original viewpoints, and suggest alternative ways of looking at initially posed questions. Through interaction, the diversity of student experiences shines through, enriching the knowledge that is building in the classroom.

Today's students are perhaps more suited to an interactive style of learning than their predecessors. Students come to class armed with mobile communication devices: the laptop or tablet, the cell phone or smart phone, all with social messaging tools that make everything from email to messaging, texting to Facebook profile updates, instantly possible. The 'digital native' students, raised with access to a more complex and digitized communication network, increasingly learn by interacting, evaluating peers' responses and controlling the time, place and pace of their participation. There is a clear fit between the interactive learning pedagogy of Inquiry and students' day to day experiences of communication. However, this shift toward instant and brief modes of communication, characterized in twitter feeds and facebook posts, has a worrisome side.

One of students' primary challenges is the ability for sustained concentration on either a verbal delivery of a talk greater than five minutes or a piece of written research more than two or three pages. The small bits exchanged in face-to-face interaction in the classroom and over students' virtual airwaves do not sit well with such longer segments of verbal and written communication. Faced with the challenge of sustained concentration, students easily tune out, and readily confess to being bored, tired, and diverted by other distractions in the classroom.

The contrast between peer interaction and lack of concentration on longer verbal deliveries and pieces of text manifest themselves in the weekly use of Critical Incident Reports adopted by many Inquiry instructors. Near the end of each class (or shortly thereafter) students write responses to five classroom incidents: what was the most engaging, the most distancing, the most helpful or affirming, the most puzzling or confusing, and the greatest surprise. In the next class, students form groups discussing the anonymous responses from their peers. Ironically, such a technique repeatedly shows how much students prize interactive learning, but also displays in rather stark terms how much verbal deliveries from peers or instructors and sizable written text in textbooks and research journal articles are unable to sustain the students' attention, and thus imagination and interest.



The Inquiry instructor is caught in a dilemma: break up the verbal deliveries into interactive chunks and turn textbooks and journal research articles into interactive exercises, or persuade students to increase their powers of concentration in dealing with longer pieces of verbal and textual communication. Interestingly, when instructors almost abandon their directive role and become sole facilitators of pure and complete peer learning, students often protest that they need more direct guidance from instructors based in sustained written text and verbal summaries. Yet when the pendulum swings too far in the direction of more guidance and less facilitation, students (or their successors) will often protest that they want less direction and greater facilitation of pure peer learning. This is one of the challenges of teaching Inquiry.

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Centre for Leadership in Learning

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Connections Newsletter

Editor: Marie Vander Kloet
Design: Reg Woodruff

