Volume 17 • Number 1 • SPRING 2006

EXCHANGE

www.nefdc.org New England Faculty Development Consortium

Message from the President

Judith Kamber, President of NEFDC, Northern Essex Community College

In November 2005, NEFDC welcomed keynote speaker Dr. Gail Mellow to our conference "Beyond Tolerance: Diversity and the Challenge of Pedagogy in American Higher Education." Dr. Mellow is President of LaGuardia Community College in Queens, NY.

LaGuardia has the most diverse student population of any community college in the country, with students hailing from over 150 different countries and speaking over 110 different languages. President Mellow's keynote address gave us an opportunity to hear about LaGuardia's institutional commitment to diversity work, hiring of new faculty, professional development, and academic initiatives such as Electronic Portfolios, Learning Communities, and the First Year Academies.

Dr. Mellow offered an afternoon session and participants learned a great deal more about electronic portfolios. Throughout the day, participants attended workshop sessions offered by faculty and administrators as our attention turned to best practices in the classroom and support services for students.

Now, we are gearing up for a new and exciting spring conference. For the first time ever, NEFDC will partner with another organization to bring to our members a collaboration that will focus on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Along with colleagues from my institution (Northern Essex Community College), I have had the distinct privilege for the past three years to participate in COPPER (Communities of Practice Pooling Educational Resources). The COPPER Cluster is a member of CASTL (Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning). Our cluster has membership from eight diverse colleges, with six of them in New England. The SoTL work, which is the foundation of COPPER, reflects in many ways the goals of NEFDC.

In The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: An Annotated Biography, Pat Hutchings speaks of the aims of CASTL: "to advance the development of teaching and learning" to:

1. Foster significant, long-lasting learning for all students
2. Enhance the practice and profession of teaching
3. Bring to faculty's work as teachers the recognition and reward afforded to other scholarly work

Our June 2nd conference, "We're Teaching, But Are Our Students Learning," will feature Dr. Barbara Cambridge, President of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Conference participants will have an opportunity to explore the wide range of scholarly work being done in communities of practice. They will hear first hand from colleagues who are making inquiries into their classroom practice, documenting and collecting evidence about their inquiries, and making this work public. These presentations and conversations will leave participants with new questions about the growing community of scholars who are engaged in discovery about teaching and learning.

Finally, as the academic year draws to a close, NEFDC will say goodbye to several valued board members: **Paul Petritis**, NEFDC Treasurer and Associate Dean for Faculty and Staff Development at Landmark College; **Pamela Sherer**, Professor, Department of Management at Providence College; and **William Rando**, Director of the Office of Teaching Fellow Preparation, McDougal Graduate Teaching Center at Yale University.

From the Editors:

The theme of the upcoming **NEFDC Spring Conference** is, **We're Teaching But Are Students Learning?** Presented by the MCC Carnegie COPPER (Communities of Practice Pooling Educational Resources to Support the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) Cluster and the New England Faculty Development Consortium, the Conference will take place on **Friday, June 2, 2006, at Middlesex Community College, Lowell, MA.**

Accordingly, several of the articles and resources in this issue of the **NEFDC Exchange** address that theme. The first four articles describe activities supported by the Carnegie Foundation. The next four address teaching strategies—individual conferences, digital storytelling that creates community, humor, and inclusive teaching—that promote student engagement and learning.

Other parts of the newsletter provide information about resources and activities that promote professional development.

And of course the events, the newsletter, and the website sponsored by NEFDC, as described throughout this issue, all exist purely to support professional development for faculty and staff.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we welcome your feedback and future contributions.

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New Directions for Expanding Communities of Practice and SoTL

Donna Killian Duffy
Professor of Psychology at Middlesex Community College and Leader for the COPPER cluster.

"It is not merely models and methods that count, but also the passion and encouragement of peers to try a new approach--peers who will listen to your woes during false starts, cheer your successes, and offer help when you ask" (Snyder & Briggs, 2003, p.19). Since March 2003, the COPPER cluster (Communities of Practice: Pooling Educational Resources to support the scholarship of teaching and learning) has been engaging over 400 faculty at eight colleges to create a community to support innovation and new collaborations across institutions. The COPPER group is one of twelve Campus Program Leadership Clusters selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning for the three-year project.

Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder (2002) suggest that "because communities of practice are organic, designing them is more a matter of shepherding their evolution than creating them from scratch" (p.51). The synergy that formed the foundation for the COPPER community of practice has evolved to an effective working group where members help each other, share resources, and solve problems together. This year the cluster is trying to expand its "pooling of educational resources" in a number of ways. The first involves a partnership with the New England Faculty Development Consortium to support the COPPER/NEFDC Spring 2006 Conference, entitled "We're Teaching, But Are Students Learning?" on June 2nd. This colloquium on the scholarship of teaching and learning will feature Barbara Cambridge, President of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, as keynote speaker.

A second initiative is the creation of the Question of the Year on the COPPER Blog by Professor Don Margulis of Middlesex Community College. The COPPER Blog has been an experimental project using the weblog format as a collaborative communication tool to encourage involvement from a wider range of participants at cluster colleges. In the life of the community it has served multiple functions including announcements, resource sharing, and discussions. The current Educational Question of the Year (What knowledge or skills will students need most to be effective citizens of our world in the future?) was selected by popular vote from a number of options presented last spring. As Don explains, the question makes the assumption that we have a sense or vision of what the future holds and what knowledge and skills will be necessary to function effectively in the world. But do we? Many of our students will still be alive 50 or more years from now. What will our world look like in the year 2055? Can we provide an educational foundation that will still serve them well as time passes and the world changes? The goal of a question of the year is to incorporate answers from a diverse group of people. Our current respondents include John Saltmarsh, Director of the New England Research Center for Higher Education, Massachusetts Congressman Marty Meehan, and John Chaffee, author of Thinking Critically, as well as numerous posts from faculty and students. Visit the weblog (http://middlesex.blogs.com/) to add your voice to the discussion through comments or an individual post.

A third initiative is the establishment of an online classroom action research project for the Spring 2006 semester. The project, coordinated by Elise Martin of Middlesex Community College, offers faculty the opportunity to evaluate and document the effectiveness of one of their instructional strategies or to investigate a question related to student learning in their course. Middlesex Community College, Northern Essex Community College and Valencia Community College will be collaborating with faculty from North Seattle Community College, Quinnipiac University and the University of the Arts in London. Participants in three clusters--a developmental math group, an English group, and an Art (Drawing) group--will share ideas on curriculum, instructional strategies, learning activities, performance criteria for student work, and meaningful assessment.

The COPPER cluster members will join with others across the country at the 2006 CASTL Colloquium, "Evidence, Impact and Momentum," on April 1-2, 2006, at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin. This colloquium is open to anyone interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning; more information is available at http://www3.uwm.edu/dept/leadershipsite/proposal06.cfm The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching will be continuing its CASTL Leadership Program and has a request for institutional proposals at http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/programs/sub.asp?key=21&subkey=858 The 2006-2009 Leadership Program will be organized around a series of themes that will build upon and expand the work the twelve clusters began in 2003-2006.

The COPPER Scholars Program at Salem State College

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COPPER Faculty Liaison and Faculty Liaison for Faculty Development
Salem State College

As the faculty coordinator for the COPPER Scholars Program at Salem State College (SSC), I have been both surprised and pleased by the fruit borne so far by the seeds sown by this program. We are in our third year of participation with our second cohort of scholars, getting ready to recruit participants for next year's program. At SSC, our program has consisted of providing faculty with a small summer stipend and a one- semester course release in return for their attendance at the Middlesex Carnegie Summer Institute, pursuit of a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) project, and participation in a year-long community of practice. Our first cohort consisted of three faculty, our second one has five. This year, we will attempt to recruit six scholars to participate, starting with the NEFDC/COPPER conference in June.

While the course release is one of the most valuable aspects of the program, allowing faculty much needed time to fully pursue a SoTL project, it is also the most problematic. The faculty who are most likely to want to take advantage of this opportunity are also the ones their departments are least willing to release because they are involved in and crucial to so many other things as well. Those faculty who have been able to obtain the necessary approval for the course release tend to be involved in a variety of initiatives. This aspect of their personalities has served the COPPER program and the cause of SoTL at SSC particularly well. Such faculty are in a position to share their experiences with large numbers of faculty colleagues, so that each year it becomes easier to generate further interest in the program.

Of the eight faculty who have been COPPER scholars, five serve or have served on the Council for Teaching and Learning, a faculty committee overseeing some aspects of faculty development on campus. Four are involved with the laptop initiative, participating either in the laptop boot camp this past summer or winter break or as Laptop Initiative Fellows during this academic year. One has been heavily involved in classroom and program assessment issues, and one has become a department chair. Given these connections, it is not surprising to see the beginnings of a core of people committed to using SoTL to improve the quality of undergraduate education on our campus. This group, through their affiliations, ties together various initiatives on campus in a way that helps more of us be aware of what is going on generally in the domain of teaching and learning at SSC.

The projects undertaken by these scholars are as diverse and complex as the faculty engaged in them. One person, an assistant professor in the Social Work department, is investigating the transmission of soft skills via on-line coursework: "Being part of the COPPER Program is allowing me valuable time to focus on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. My COPPER Project is comparing student learning in web-based and traditional sections of a service-learning Social Work course. The results are illuminating some of the more subtle differences between these diverse teaching methods. I encourage others who are interested in the COPPER Program to explore it." Another project is a collaboration between a dancer and a poet asking students to learn how to combine these media to form new means of expression: "The COPPER scholarship allowed me to do teaching that I never would have been able to do otherwise--and it was tremendously valuable for me and the students. It was certainly one of the best learning experiences in their college experience."

These projects and others like them have led our COPPER scholars to make plans for longer and broader projects. One person is increasing his involvement with service-learning. Another is expanding his project on the moral lexicon of college students into a project on the emotional development of students in their first year. Both of these scholars have found partners in other departments with whom to collaborate on these projects. In the domains of service and of research, Salem State's COPPER scholars are spreading the word to our colleagues. In the field of teaching as well, we are seeing a difference, with the people who have participated in the project noting that they are more willing to experiment in their classrooms, that they have become more receptive to interactive modes of teaching and learning, and that they are having more conversations with their colleagues about what goes on in their classrooms.

The NEFDC EXCHANGE
Tom Thibodeau, New England Institue of Technology, Warwick, RI, Editor
Steve Berrien, Bristol Community College, Fall River, MA, Asst. Editor
The NEFDC EXCHANGE is published in the Fall and Spring of each academic year. Designed to inform the membership of the activities of the organization and the ideas of members, it depends upon member submissions. Submissions may be sent to either editor at tthibodeau@neit.edu or sberrien@bristol.mass.edu.
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"A Progress Report on the 2005-06 Carnegie Scholars Residency"

Jack Mino, Professor of Psychology
Holyoke Community College, Carnegie Scholar

Sponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), the Carnegie Scholars Program brings together outstanding faculty committed to investigating and documenting significant issues in the teaching and learning of their fields. As the CASTL website explains, "Neither an award for teaching excellence, nor a teaching-improvement workshop, the Carnegie Scholars Program has as its purpose the creation of a community of scholars, diverse in all the ways that matter, whose work will advance the profession of teaching and deepen student learning." All Carnegie Scholars participate in a one-year residency at The Carnegie Foundation, where they produce individual scholarship of teaching and learning projects in a variety of forms and formats, including project summaries, snapshots, and portfolios. An archive of Carnegie Scholars' projects has been created and made public using the KEEP Toolkit, a set of web-based tools that help teachers, students, and institutions create compact and engaging knowledge representations on the Web. Since 1998 there have been five CASTL cohorts, involving 140 faculty from across the disciplines and institutional types. The 21 faculty selected to participate in the 2005 Carnegie Scholars cohort are focusing on the theme of undergraduate integrative learning.

Some Residency Highlights in Loose Chronological Order

Like a great Italian meal, the first 2005 Carnegie Scholars Residency in June was an inspired combination of no more than four fresh ingredients prepared in perfect balance. First ingredient, the people – a diverse group of teachers (including the 21 Carnegie Scholars, Senior Carnegie Scholars, and Carnegie Foundation Staff) dedicated to serving the learner with a profound generosity of mind, heart, and soul. Second ingredient, the place – an eco-friendly hilltop conference center built on a human scale to overlook the city of San Francisco and the surrounding hills, inhabited by mountain lions and kestrels, and featuring Jerusalem stone patios and a cascading natural spring (a.k.a. "the water feature"). Third ingredient, the support – the food and accommodations were lavish and abundant, but it was the social, intellectual, and spiritual support that made the residency a transformational experience. Fourth ingredient, the design of the residency – the preparation (including the creation of our web-based personal profiles and KEEP Toolkit project snapshots), our brilliant project work groups of seven, the large group plenary led by Lee Shulman, dinner at Campo di Bocce, and darts at the Crown and Harp. Taken together, these were the essential ingredients of a transformational professional development experience for me. As Lee Shulman counseled and all of us understood, "Once a Carnegie Scholar, always a Carnegie Scholar."

During the first three days or so of the June residency, the butterflies abounded. Unfortunately, reflection only prompted more anxiety. Was my project really any good? Was I really a qualified academic? Did I have the scholarly capabilities to carry out this research? In short, I was having a crisis of confidence. I was able to work through such deeply felt self-doubt only with the generous support and affirmation provided by my project group: David Geelan (Secondary Education – University of Alberta), Rona Halualani (Communication Studies, San Jose University), Michael Smith (History – Ithaca College), Trish Ferrett (Interdisciplinary Science – Carleton College), Mark Cladis (Religious Studies – Brown University), Joanne Stewart (Chemistry – Hope College), Mary Huber (Carnegie Foundation), and Richard Gale (Carnegie Foundation). Through a simple but ingenious process of peer review (including independent and group reviews of projects in writing and in person), we developed the trust necessary to be vulnerable and thus see the "invisible" in each of our projects. And it was these discoveries we made together that restored my confidence and moved me to the next level in my project design.

One afternoon midway through the residency, everything came together as if it was fated: a magnificently rich sample of student writing, a "sympatico" partner from my project group (Trish Ferrett) who like me was an intellectual nomad roaming the disciplinary territories of academia, and a simple but fertile method for data gathering: close reading of student texts. Reading together in a pine grove below the conference center, we discovered some of the precise mechanisms students use to integrate their learning across disciplines. Though unplanned, it happened as

a result of many months of preparation. And though it took less than an hour, it will have a lasting impact throughout and beyond the life of my project, particularly the methodology for "discovering moments of integration."

One of the last project group exercises of the residency involved defining, describing, and explaining Integrative Learning, in effect operationalizing it. The task was a difficult one and we were tired and feeling uninspired. Like the "3 Pillars of Chemistry" (thanks Joanne & Tricia), we were challenged to make sense of and synthesize "35 Pillars of Integrative Learning," i.e., 35 categories of terms, phrases, and expressions from a previously brainstormed list. After a number of false starts we intuitively came to a solution – explain Integrative Learning by doing it! Capitalizing on the unique strengths of each member of our group, we created a portrait of integrative learning in the form of a fictional case study – "Sally's Story." As each project group represented its conception of Integrative Learning, a seemingly natural progression emerged. The first group distilled the essential elements of Integrative Learning and articulated a clear and comprehensive definition. The second group followed up with an application if you will, a "thick" description of the how, why, where, and when of Integrative Learning. The last group (my project group in what can only be described as "just-in-time teaching") performed the case study as a synthesis of Integrative Learning. Our presentation received a standing ovation and, to quote a member of the second group, our group "kicked ass," but only in the most good-natured way.

On the last night of the residency we were pinned in a very moving "ordination" ceremony of sorts conducted by Lee Shulman and the rest of the Carnegie Foundation gang: Mary Huber, Pat Hutchings, Marcia Babb, Jim Bequette, Whitney Schlegel, and David Reichard. Our names were called and each of us received a silver "CF" (Carnegie Foundation) pin, hugs all around, and heartfelt applause and congratulations from our colleagues in residence.

On the plane home: here then is a preliminary list of lessons I learned while designing my SoTL research project on interdisciplinary teaching and learning at the June 2005 Carnegie Scholars Residency.

1. Slow down and focus on the fundamentals – my students, course materials, and disciplinary research methods.

2. Begin at the center and ground my project-research in student learning. (The theory or conceptual framework will emerge later.)

3. Be open to what students can teach me about their learning, not so much in words but in actions, i.e., what they can do with the course material.

4. Collaborate with like-minded colleagues throughout my project but especially in the early stages of the project design to push development beyond the limitations of my experience and imagination.

5. Use student work as a vehicle for "backward" course (re)design: if this is what students can and can't do with the course material, how can I design the course to serve them better?

The second residency in January 2006 was short in comparison to the first but equally intense. Half a year into our projects, the work of this residency felt purposeful – it was no longer "simply" design work. The first plenary of the residency, "From Learning to Leadership," brought this feeling home. We all received complimentary copies of Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching Commons, by Mary Huber and Pat Hutchings (2005): here again was the community dimension of our work writ large. Over the next three days we met in the safe and trust-generating space of our project groups to learn from and build on each other's work. Peer review was the heart of this second residency experience. Using the third iteration of our KEEP Toolkit project snapshot as a foundation and a "critical friend" to provide preemptive constructive feedback, we reached deep with both rigor and support. What follows is a brief survey of my work group's integrative learning projects.

Informed by the vision of the "Slow Learning Movement," Mark Cladis seeks to foster deep engagement in his students by creating "gracious time and space" in his philosophy course, "Religion Gone Wild: Spirituality and the Environment." Michael Smith is keeping it local by developing "ecological citizenship" among his students and the Ithaca community via service learning in his environmental history course. Rona Halualani is showcasing student connections between the personal and the cultural – "portraits" of her students' transformation as they engage in intercultural communication in a required general education diversity course.

Trish Ferrett and Joanne Stewart are "distance" teaming to teach an interdisciplinary science course on abrupt climate change and the human condition at their respective institutions. While Trish is searching for integrative "flashes of insight" among her first-year students, Joanne hopes to help juniors and seniors connect science understanding to "who they are and what they care about." My project also focuses on discovering these interdisciplinary learning moments but in the context of learning communities across three course levels – developmental, general education, and honors. Reiterating all our projects in a way is David Geelan's "fractal" model of science education, which creates a classroom-based and technology-supported "community of practice" among student teachers, secondary science teachers, and university faculty.

"A Progress Report on the 2005-06 Carnegie Scholars Residency" continued from page 5

All our projects share a common ground--transformational learning and teaching that is deeply engaged in identity making with our students as we build community in our classrooms. This mission, however, is not without its perils, as our discussion of the "prescription problem" revealed.

In our final plenary, "From Example to Exemplar," Lee Shulman spotlighted where we have to go next to build on what we started. Challenging us with what he called the "Sesame Street" question – "One of these things is not like the other…" – he prompted us to reflect on our own projects and begin mapping the teaching commons by establishing case examples and exemplars of SoTL practice. For example, what was my project a case of, and how was it similar to or different from my colleagues' work? It was his hope that by using the complementary scholarships of discovery (i.e., vertical research) and integration (i.e., horizontal research), we could weave these "punctuated residencies" into our teaching lives.

At this point I'm still a Carnegie Scholar in training. Perhaps at the end of June 2006--after the third and final residency, five iterations of my project snapshot, and three rounds of peer review with the "magnificent seven," I'll feel it beyond name only. In the meantime, here are some lessons learned from the second Carnegie Scholar's Residency 2006.

(1) Remember the 3-Cs: Context, context, and context - Frame my project within my course, institution, and discipline or field.

(2) Keep it local - Pose a question that produces knowledge that is locally relevant. Moving from a case example to an exemplar will emerge later.

(3) Apply the passion test – Centerpiece that question(s), that data gathering method, that line of interpretation that matters most to my students and me.

(4) Slice it – Given a large and diverse database, less is more, so begin with a richly detailed but digestible slice of my research.

(5) Tell a compelling and plausible story – Depending on my audience, construct a narrative that is grounded in student voices: authentic and particular.

Postscript: For those interested in viewing the third iteration of my KEEP Toolkit project snapshot on interdisciplinary learning, go to: http://sakai.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=40497257039414

NEFDC Membership Meeting and Board Meetings

The Annual Meeting of the members of NEFDC will be held at the Fall Conference on Friday, November 17, 2006 at the Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center in Westford, Massachusetts. If there are items you wish to discuss, or if you need more information, please contact the President of NEFDC, Judith Kamber.

The NEFDC Board will meet next in November, 2006. If you are interested in getting information to the Board, or in making a presentation at a Board meeting, please contact the Board through the NEFDC web site.

The Evolution of a Question: Snapshots from the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL)

Howard Tinberg, Professor of English
Bristol Community College
Carnegie Scholar

June 2005

The opportunity to undertake a year-long research project involving three residencies at the Carnegie Foundation was too good to pass up—not merely because of the gorgeous setting on the Stanford campus but because I would have the opportunity to develop the means to study, in a systematic and scholarly way, what transpires in my classroom. The scholarship of teaching and learning, rooted as it is in the disciplines while acting to expand what Lee Shulman has called "pedagogic content knowledge," provides the means to do so (65).

My research would be focused on a single honors course, "Remembering the Holocaust in Literature and History," which I team-teach with a colleague in history. My particular research interest derived from my observations that students have difficulty attaining a critical distance on the literature, focusing instead on the graphic and horrifying detail without being able to inquire as to how memoirs, poetry, and fiction have been constructed--indeed, how the Shoah itself has been represented.

Students face an equally unsettling challenge as to how or when or even whether to express their feelings in regards to the reading and discussion subjects in the course when the classroom, throughout their lives as students, has not necessarily privileged an emotional component to academic study.

I formulated the following research question: How can I encourage and facilitate both a cognitive and affective response to the literature of the Holocaust or Shoah? That was how the question stood prior to our first residency in June 2005.

July 2005

Just as the characters in Holocaust stories find their expectations violated by the situations that assault them, so readers entering this imagined world must adjust to the strenuous demands it makes on their power to imagine. (Langer 238)

After the July residency, during which I had the opportunity to share ideas with collaborative colleagues, I began to formulate not one question for research but two questions: one that I would consider short range, the other long term. The first aimed to describe student reading practice; the second called upon my intervention to alter that practice in the light of what my research yields.

• Short Range: How might I classify the way that students respond to the literature?

• Long Range: What pedagogical practices can I devise to promote student response to Shoah literature that draws upon both the affective and cognitive?

January 2006

Prior to the January residency, and after teaching the course in the fall, I made an adjustment to the project.

After some reflection and some careful listening to my students' struggle with the literature of trauma, I thought it prudent to scale back my goal to focus on what we in the CASTL group call a "What Is" question. My research would attempt to describe and categorize students' ways of reading Shoah literature, as documented in taped "reading aloud" sessions, reading journals, and various other forms of data. I was convinced, after listening to and reading students' response during the semester, that their reaction to the literature was quite complex and thus required focused consideration and documentation BEFORE I could measure the effect of teacherly intervention in that response.

February 2006

After the January residency, I began to see the larger implications of my project. The study was in part about making the reading and thinking that accompanied reading visible. How often had I simply assigned pages for students to read, expecting them to come to class prepared to offer a complex array of responses—without any understanding of how they actually read difficult material? This project allowed me access to what students were thinking while they were reading.

Moreover, it was what they were reading that, finally, formed the rationale for this study. I now noted that my project focused on the reading of difficult texts, most notably texts that describe trauma. How do students at particular stages in their development react to

the literature of trauma? With silence? With expressions of heart-felt emotion? With inferential thinking? Are they able to draw upon disciplinary knowledge? All these questions became important for me. From a somewhat anecdotal sense of my students' discomfort, I have moved to the point of documenting what actually happens as my students read the literature of the Shoah and what implications I may draw for others who "read trauma."

This broader, and far more complex question, has significant connection to the particular population of community college students, who so often come to college having suffered their own economic dislocation and personal trauma. Perhaps my question, in the end, will be as much about students' reading the trauma of their own lives—and coming to terms with that trauma—as negotiating a difficult literary text.

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Book Review

Sue Barrett, Director —The Connors Family Learning Center, Boston College

Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Course, Department and Institutional Change in Higher Education, **Mathew L. Ouellett, Editor**
(New Forums, Stillwater, OK, 2005)

A couple of recent conversations underline for me how much we need Matt Ouellett's book. In one, a first-year AHANA (African, Hispanic, Asian and Native American) student explained that she plans to spend her four years in a multi-cultural dorm because she doesn't think the white students like her or her friends. In the other, a group of graduate teaching fellows asked me how they can demonstrate to potential employers that they have a commitment to diversity when the only place they've ever taught is a predominantly white private school. Neither of these exchanges was particularly unusual or dramatic. Reflecting on them, though, I wonder why we still live with these situations, what's happening on other campuses, and how I can work more effectively for change on my own campus.

Teaching Inclusively is a resource for all of us who are asking these questions. It addresses inclusiveness across a broad spectrum, looking at issues of race and ethnicity, but also of gender, sexuality, nationality, and disability. In almost 700 pages of contributions, it includes models of best practices, theoretical articles, examples from the classroom and from every level of the college and university. Its different perspectives on inclusiveness make this book especially relevant to the faculty, faculty developers and administrators of the NEFDC.

For example, an interesting chapter for anyone who teaches is "Creating Inclusive Classrooms: A View Through the Student Lens," by James Greenberg and Andre Perry. The authors asked a diverse groups of students, both graduate and undergraduate, about their experiences with inclusiveness in classes. The results are not exactly surprising, as they say themselves, but it is refreshing to hear from students on the issue. Some said it was important to have professors who shared their race or ethnicity, but others said it was much more important that the teacher establish a respectful relationship with the whole class. Class set-up was mentioned several times; students appreciate sitting in a circle or having the teacher otherwise communicate an open attitude. They also mentioned the importance of having a mix of students within a given class. Graduate students largely agreed with the undergrads, but many said that especially when it comes to dissertation writing, there is not much room for divergence from mainstream thought. The most encouraging message from the students overall seems to be that making our classes more inclusive is really in our hands as teachers: invite students into the learning process, teach in a learner-centered way, listen to student voices, and provide support for all students.

An excellent chapter for faculty developers is "But How Can I Talk With Faculty About That? Approaches to Consulting Around Multicultural Issues," by Matthew Kaplan and Beth Glover Reed. They make the point that multiculturalism is always part of the conversation about teaching; sometimes it is the central issue, while at others it is embedded within a larger situation or the overall environment. They give illustrative vignettes, including one in which a lab instructor is unsure of how to work with a physically challenged student and one in which a TA is focusing a large part of a course on the discussion of gay marriage without seeming to be aware of the reactions this will provoke. The article offers concrete and practical suggestions for beginning consultations in such cases and for bringing multicultural issues into more general teaching discussions.

This is a book I'll turn to again and again. With such informative and provocative articles, plus an annotated bibliography and an overview of online materials, it is a wonderful resource. Matt Ouellett has made a major contribution that will assist all of us as we work to make our campuses more inclusive.

From the Conference Table to the Classroom Desk:

The Confidence-Building Outcomes of Individual Student-Teacher Interaction

Russell Green,
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One month into each semester, I marvel at a unique transformation that occurs. The change I observe involves a simultaneous shift in both my students' performance and my own ability to manage the eighty to one-hundred freshman composition writers who sit in front of me. It says clearly on my syllabus, "Each student will have an individual conference with the instructor... This meeting is mandatory." I explain to them that the purpose of this conference outside of the classroom is for us to collaborate on revision strategies on their essays, for us to chat informally, and for us to discuss any challenges they might be facing in the course. I'm not sure what they expect when the sign up sheet for appointments is passed around. I know, however, what I have come to expect. I know that immediately after this one-on-one student-teacher interaction, I have classrooms full of more committed students who have just a little more engagement in discussion and much more confidence in their writing skills. The transformation I observe in myself is even more astounding. The eighty to one-hundred faces in front of me have names I can remember without prompting from my roster. I suddenly see those in front of me at their desks not as mere faces, but as individuals with unique lives and stories to share.

The conference approach to expository writing instruction is not new. Most English teachers I know employ this in their practices. It's fundamental to composition theory. It's also leaked into the higher-level literature classes I teach because the positive effects are so profound. Jan Turnbill states, "It is an incomparable means of individualizing the teaching-learning relationship" (qtd. in Neman, 159). Naturally those learners who feel most inhibited from participating in class stand the most to gain. Perhaps fearful of having their ideas judged by their peers, they can express themselves in the safer, more private space carved out by the instructor. Typically, teachers evaluate student essays far away from the student who does the writing. A student gets his or her paper back with a jungle of revision comments to machete through. This detached approach to skill-building has an alternative. By reviewing a student's writing while the student is present, "the…teacher reacts as a reader [therefore] students can see that writing is primarily an act of communication in which the needs of the reader are crucial considerations," notes Muriel Harris (qtd. in Neman, 159-160). The one-on-one conference also facilitates a dialogue between teacher and student. Both can ask questions of the other. In discussing the phenomenon of individualized face-to-face feedback, D.A. Schon writes, "learning blocks can be overcome if both coach and learner search actively for a convergence of meaning through a dialogue of reciprocal reflection in action" (qtd. in John, 166).

The conference also presents an excellent opportunity for teacher and student to interact in a more relaxed dialogue. The hierarchy of the classroom retreats in the intimacy of the conference room. My students and I discuss not just the craft of the essay, but the content. Students are perhaps validated by my desire to let the ideas of their written communication spill out into spoken communication. The writing, then, has not been just an exercise for a grade, but a springboard for an extended conversation between us—their position on a particular social issue they wrote about in a persuasive argument, an anecdote they related in a personal narrative, the inspiration they feel for the public figure they investigated in a research paper—students realize that their ideas can engender intellectual discourse and that the events of their lives are relevant.

Surely, many students get this validation in the classroom. Some already had confidence in their opinions and in their ability to express themselves before they even began taking my course. Others developed that confidence during early classroom discussion or in writing assignments. However, there are always students who are too inhibited to take risks and are slow to develop confidence until they sit with me at the conference table. There, they realize that their intellect is meaningful and that the man who stands at the front of the room is an accessible person very much interested in what they have to say.

Now, previously quiet students begin to take risks in writing and discussion. Performance improves as I count the dividends of their increased investment in self-expression and critical thinking. One better essay is in itself a wonderful by-product of the conference, but the more far-reaching return from this practice is how the confidence my students discover at the conference table migrates to the desk of the classroom.

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Digital Storytelling to Build Community in a School of Public Health Curriculum

Rob Schadt, Director, Office of Teaching, Learning and Technology, Boston University School of Public Health

When students enrolled in digital storytelling as a project I was developing for Master's in Public Health students in a Mass Communication in Public Health course in Fall 2005, they were looking to learn new media skills and techniques they could use as public health professionals. Intuitively, I knew they would come away with more than that. When we published our stories and collectively reflected on the project, the students and I realized we had experienced much more.

First, a word about digital storytelling. In basic terms, digital storytelling combines narrative with images, artifacts, sounds, and/or movies to produce short (2- to 5-minute) movies that can be shown on tape, CD-ROM, DVD or via the Internet. More about digital storytelling can be found at the Center for Digital Storytelling website (www.storycenter.org). Digital storytelling applications are appropriate for education at all levels (including literature, composition, and beyond), internet marketing, and community organizing and advocacy.

Digital storytelling applications are appropriate for education at all levels (including literature, composition, and beyond), internet marketing, and community organizing and advocacy.

I became familiar with this latter application at a digital storytelling workshop. It was there I saw past the use of web technology to the human web spun by individuals sharing stories with each other and combining them for a powerful means of building community. When groups of individuals from a community are brought together to produce their own short, hybrid videos, the process is useful internally for reflection, documentation, and evaluation, and also externally for outreach, education, and fundraising. When collected on a web page, these videos allow a community to be seen from a unique and, at the same time, individual point of view.

In our teaching approach we adopted a train-the-trainer model. Students would write their own personal stories, tell these stories using digital story techniques, and then work one-on--one with teens at the Codman Square Tech Center in Dorchester, MA, enabling these teens to design and produce their own digital stories. This collection of stories would then appear on web pages hosted by the BU School of Public Health and at the Dorchester House and Codman Square Health Center. Beyond the literal community context we were working in, we would be teaching and learning in community.

I began the project by telling a personal story of my own. Also, I shared with the class my "memories box" containing old photos, newspaper clipping, drawings, slides, and other memorabilia that I would use to make the digital story, "My Father and I." This approach was revelatory in itself. I was reminded of the process of self-discovery that Parker Palmer describes as identity in the context of teaching and the true self: "By identity I mean an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised…"

Of course I felt a little uneasy sharing with students in this way, and with all that goes on in an initial class meeting, I left feeling unsure about their reaction to it. In later discussions, however, when the students had begun to interact with the Dorchester teens, telling them their stories, the BU students agreed that my modeling of the storytelling process with my own very personal story was unlike any academic experience they had had thus far and that it enabled them to share--with me, with each other, and with the teens--aspects of themselves that they formerly would not have shared. Also, as the students read and discussed each other's stories, they reported a sense of community that they had never felt in the various group projects they had done before. They felt that because they shared with the teens in this personal way, the teens also

opened up to them, revealing aspects of themselves that they otherwise would have not shared with such a group. Clearly there are many opportunities for sharing stories to encourage group formation and team building in more traditional class settings.

With regard to our educational goals--learning to record, edit and mix audio narration, work with Photoshop to edit images, and use Adobe Premiere to create video files, there were clear and measurable results. Each student had no previous media production experience, but each produced a unique and compelling digital story. Likewise, the teens' stories were equally compelling and well-produced. One 14-year-old wrote about being the primary caregiver for her 2-year-old nephew. Another wrote of the challenges of the state MCAS test. Each painted a vivid picture of life in an inner city-setting. With regard to community development goals, we could probably claim less success. Though we had a group of teens pass in and out of our project, only two teens actually produced finished stories. However, I can't help thinking something much more was accomplished for the MPH students in the project regarding their future work in communities.

Most programs will acknowledge the importance of placing classroom-imparted theories in an actual community context to give real meaning to the curriculum, and many set up a field practicum or methods course for students to encounter real public health issues in the field. Yet the interaction of theory and practice, or in this case of theory and story, intrigues me. Robert Coles, in his book The Call of Stories, talks about foregoing ascertaining what factors or variables have been at work in a case and instead focusing on the person's story from that person's unique point of view. He writes, "The people who come to see us bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly. We have to remember that what we hear is their story." He is referring to doctors and psychiatric patients, but I think this could be extended to public health people working with community participants. We might do well, at least for a while, to put aside formulating their problem. Perhaps we might concentrate more on understanding the people in a community and less on trying to change their behavior. I wonder if we wouldn't also do well to instruct our students who venture into community settings to promote public health to start by asking, "Why don't you tell me a story or two…?"

You can view the Dorchester teen and MPH student stories at http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/SB733Fall05/index.html

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2 Coles, Robert The Call of Stories (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co. 1989) p. 7

WWW.NEFDC.ORG

Have you visited the NEFDC web site lately? It is maintained by Board member Rob Schadt from Boston University. Information on the annual fall conference and the Spring Roundup for Faculty Development Professionals, contact information for the board, membership forms, and related data are all available online. Take advantage of this valuable resource and bookmark us at www.nefdc.org

The Serious Benefits of Humor for Teaching and Learning

Melissa M. Juchniewicz, Adjunct Faculty
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Humor is underrated as a powerful pedagogical tool – it "gets no respect" in higher education, sometimes because of an incomplete understanding of its power, sometimes because of its misuse. There are students and teachers alike who are unable to distinguish between teasing, kidding, lying, joking, sarcasm, satire, parody, self-deprecation, low humor, high humor, and real humor. Real humor depends upon a mastery of language and its subtleties, as well as a profound understanding of human nature that transcends culture. These criteria would seem to make a humor connection between teacher and students almost impossible.

But we know humor does occur in classrooms, and when laughter comes from all students in response to an intentionally funny story or remark, it is deeply unifying. It can even serve to crystallize a concept that students were on the brink of grasping. Whatever its source, to walk down a hallway and hear laughter from a classroom can give confidence about the entire institution: "something good is going on here."

People love to laugh; students in particular need to alleviate their stressful, goal-focused, serious, day-to-day lives. In response to the question, "Why is he or she a good teacher?" or "What do you like about him or her?" a student may well answer, "She makes me laugh," or "He's funny," and that's an enormous endorsement. Laughter, and the positive feelings associated with it, are memorable; thus when it is part of a learning experience the learning is deeper. Medical research supports the physiological and emotional benefits of laughter. It is a healthy practice.

But laughing with others can also be exclusionary, and cruel to boot. Joking and laughing in the classroom can range from the most inclusive to the most exclusive practice. A teacher who uses humor has to have a strong intrapersonal awareness and a keen sense of his or her own various biases. In addition, most joking requires a thorough and honest understanding of audience members in order for it to be effective and not unkind.

We recognize that people laugh when they feel superior, which can often turn negative when humor is at the expense of others rather than, say, an institution or an idea. Those with a Freudian bent remind us that we also laugh when we feel relief from our constant repression of aggressive impulses, often the font of the ever-present "inappropriate" humor. But humor doesn't have to be at the expense of something or someone, even the teller.

For instance, here's a geography joke: a teacher is having students guess the identification of a city after having given them only meteorological and geographical information about it. Most students solve it and begin shouting, Minneapolis! It's Minneapolis! The joke-teller says, you're all wrong, it's St. Paul. O.k., you had to be there.

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Such humorists as Dorothy Parker and Oscar Wilde were funny because they spoke truths about society in their present days. More than that, they used the language as a tool to sculpt their intention: Wilde's pun "Work is the curse of the drinking class" and Parker's responding to a ringing phone with "What fresh Hell is this?" may have been remarks particular to their eras, but still, generations later, resound as humorous.

So much of what is proffered as funny by the mass media today is low humor, attempting to appeal to the lowest common denominators of our understanding. That is not to diminish the importance of slapstick and other visual humor: the Three Stooges and Charlie Chaplin are archetypes who still transcend cultures and experiences to unite people in laughter.

"I don't get it" is a threat to anyone trying to be humorous. Yet isn't that what is supposed to go on in

the classroom – a student doesn't get it, then learns to figure it out? Trying to figure out a joke is a way of scaffolding; perhaps the joke is squarely in the zone of proximal development. Many of us have observed young children for whom a joke means nothing at age five, then at age seven that same child finds the same joke hilarious, and then at age ten realizes it's just stupid. Responses to humor can be linked to all kinds of development.

The joke-teller takes a tremendous social risk at every attempt to be funny. A successful joke in the classroom by an otherwise unremarkable student can change the entire climate for him or her; it can even be the turning point toward success. A teacher who gets laughs can represent the one thing a group of students has in common. Students with complicated and demanding lives may have the only laugh of their day in class. And humor opens doors: I observed a young man who appeared to feel out of place in a classroom, until he made a joke that was received by his classmates with chuckles. From that moment, he became more engaged, listened more actively, asked clarifying questions, and generally tuned in. Joking about something in common with classmates is a way to measure the classroom culture, to feel it out, decide how to proceed, how to react, how much to share, what kind of words to use, how to behave. Amazingly, most of this is done unconsciously. Even if we did have the metacognitive ability to select the humorous words that could unlock all of these mysteries, the process of selecting would compromise the results. The success of humor usually depends upon the teller's intuitive abilities and spontaneity.

But is humor, therefore, only a gift or a mystery, or can we learn to use it? When is something funny, and why do people laugh? Any hint of a classical education requires an understanding of humor as that which is incongruous without involving danger or pain. Even to limit these questions to presume the incongruity theory, there is so much to consider about cognition, schemata, socialization, and culture before discovering why something is incongruous. Yet the answer is simple: it doesn't fit, so it's funny; it's unexpected, so it's funny. Still, so much has to be agreed upon for something to be unexpected. My father, who made his living doing stand-up comedy, used to say the first joke he ever heard was, "A baker to a beggar: could you eat a bun? The beggar to the baker: why, sir, I could eat fifty bloody buns." No, it's not funny, but this was told to him by his uncle in the 1920s, who likely carried it from Scotland fifty years earlier. The joke is that the phrasing of the baker's question would have been understood to mean, "Would you like to have a bun," but the beggar turns the meaning around to "are you able to eat a bun?"

Even though time and place can be barriers to humor, humor can be one of the swiftest and most universal means of communication. When something happens that catches the public's attention, the often-tasteless joke travels faster than the media; and this was true even before the Internet, television, or radio. Tracing where it starts and how it travels could reveal a lot about social structure, or it could lend support to the theoretical proposal that people make common discoveries and have common creative inspirations at the same moment, distance notwithstanding. This is an underground phenomenon, unlike the global response to the political cartoons depicting a militant Mohammed. Those responses, however, illustrate the power and scope of material under the umbrella of humor.

I started with a joke that humor "gets no respect" in academia – a reference to the popular comic who called himself Rodney Dangerfield. Dangerfield, or Jack Roy, or Fat Jack Roy as he was known before the more popular incarnation, created an image of a nervous, index-finger-in-the-collar, shifty-eyed guy whose refrain about respect struck a chord with audiences and propelled him to fame. Before he developed this character, he worked the circuit, not getting a lot of respect from his peers, but he watched people like Joe Ansis and Will Jordan, refined his act, stuck to it, and learned. Bill Mahar wasn't funny when he was young (our fathers were friends and we were kids together); he was left out, isolated and lonely. His humor's bitter edge likely has that loneliness as its source. But that bitter edge was the chord that resounded with audiences for him, accounting for his success. Although these are examples of professional comedians, they address the question of whether we can learn to use humor in the classroom. When it comes from the heart, humor can work.

Analyzing humor reveals its complexity, but unlike examining modern art that has a solid base in an artistic tradition, or jazz with firm roots in music theory, analysis can ruin humor. Sometimes we laugh and it means, "I recognize that. I've experienced that and I'm like that, too." Sometimes it means, "I'm smarter than that." Sometimes it means, "That could never happen that way but imagine if it did," or "that person would never behave that way but imagine if he or she did." Sometimes we laugh because other people are laughing. Sometimes we don't know why we laugh but it lifts us up, and that in itself is a powerful argument for finding ways to bring humor and laughter into our classrooms.

SPRING CONFERENCE

A Colloquium on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

We're Teaching But Are Students Learning?

Friday, June 2, 2006
Middlesex Community College
Lowell, MA

Presented by the
MCC Carnegie COPPER* Cluster
and
New England Faculty Development Consortium

The Middlesex Community College Carnegie COPPER* Cluster and the New England Faculty Development Consortium are pleased to announce their first-ever joint program, on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. This conference combines the MCC Carnegie Summer Institute with the NEFDC Spring Roundup to create a synergy that will entergize all of us!

Preliminary Schedule

Note: A detailed schedule and complete workshop descriptions will be posted on the website as planning is completed.

Friday, June 2
8:00—9:00 Continental Breakfast and Registration
9:00—10:15 Concurrent Workshops I
10:30—11:45 Concurrent Workshops II
12:00—1:30 **Lunch and Keynote** **Dr. Barbara Cambridge** President, International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
1:45-3:00 Concurrent Workshops III
3:15-4:30 Concurrent Workshops IV

Keynote Speaker
Barbara L. Cambridge
President
International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Registration is open at http://academic.middlesex.mass.edu/KateSweeney/Institute/entry3.htm
Or by downloading a registration form at http://www.nefdc.org

Barbara Cambridge fills the roles of senior program officer for the National Council of Teachers of English, CASTL associate for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and president of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. She serves as a commissioner for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and on the Boards of the Washington Internship Institute and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council. Barbara co-leads the National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research and serves as consulting editor for Change magazine and editor of the Journal of Teaching Writing. At her home campus, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, Barbara is professor of English and associate dean of the faculties. Her latest publications include books on electronic portfolios for students, teachers, and institutions and on campus support for the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Fall Conference Information

The NEFDC Fall Conference

It is not too soon to start planning for the NEFDC Fall conference. The theme for the NEFDC 2006 Fall Conference is "Improving Student Learning through Assessment and Evaluation". The conference will feature a keynote with Dr. Barbara Walvoord, along with workshops, teaching tip sessions and opportunities for socializing and networking. The title of the keynote is " Making the Grading Process Fair, Time-Efficient, and Conducive to Learning"

Barbara E. Walvoord, Ph.D. works with assessment at the University of Notre Dame, teaches English, and is currently directing a Lilly-funded study of 70 highly effective teachers of introductory theology and religion. She has taught English for more than 30 years and was the 1986 Maryland English Teacher of the Year for Higher Education. Her many publications on teaching, student writing, and assessment include Assessment Clear and Simple (Jossey-Bass, 2004) and Effective Grading (Jossey-Bass, 1998). She has conducted workshops and consulted at more than 250 institutions and has served as a consultant to several National Science Foundation grants, helping science, engineering, and computer science faculty to assess whether grant-sponsored curricular and pedagogical changes actually enhanced student learning. In 2004-05, she coordinated Notre Dame's self-study for reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. She has been at Notre Dame for ten years. Before that, she directed faculty development and writing-across-the-curriculum programs at the University of Cincinnati

The NEFDC will be sending out a call for proposals and conference registration and schedule information in the near future.

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