

CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

<http://ctl.calpoly.edu>

Winter 2006

Message from Joe Grimes



Happy New Calendar Year. As always, I invite you to seek our completely confidential assistance in any of the areas listed in the box at the end of this article. I also invite you to ask for help in areas that may not be covered in the list.

First, let's spend a few moments on the small stuff in teaching and learning and put aside the cliché of "Don't sweat the small stuff."

Here are a few suggestions and observations:

- Almost every student/faculty difficulty results from a communication breakdown. Students will be much more cooperative and supportive if they clearly understand course procedures and are aware of their responsibilities in the communication process.

- The syllabus may be the first and most important impression that you as a faculty member give to the student. Clarity of class processes in the syllabus will go a long way toward creating clear communication with the students. Many people and organizations, including courts, believe that the syllabus is a legal document.

Also, in regard to students:

- Developing an interest in your students, including learning their names, will show that you care about them.
- Arriving at class early, staying after, and honoring your office hours will demonstrate faculty interest and generate greater interest by the students.
- Making changes to the class to accommodate struggles indicates your interest. Communicating why the change is being made is also important.
- Attending seriously to all student questions, simple or complex, is significant.
- Praising the class for its contribution will provide benefits to all students because they will be more engaged.

(...continued on page 7)

- Do you need someone with whom you can discuss a problem?
- Would you like to have someone observe your class and offer useful feedback?
- Do you want to confer about a plan that you have for a course?
- Do you need assistance finding a campus resource?
- Would you like to try out a new teaching method using our smart classroom?

The Center for Teaching and Learning is here for you, and our work with you is completely confidential



The Center for Teaching and Learning
Kennedy Library, room 510

We are open from 9 to 5, Monday through Friday.
Phone us at 756-7002 or 756-2088

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CTL Announcements

2006/2007 CSU Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive Program/ Forgivable Loan Doctoral Incentive Program

This competitive program, open to doctoral students across the country, provides financial assistance to graduate students in order to increase the pool of qualified individuals applying for faculty positions to teach the diverse student body in the CSU. The program provides loans (up to \$10,000 per year and \$30,000 total for Ph.D students), loan forgiveness (if a full-time, instructional position is obtained in the CSU upon completion of the doctorate), and sponsorship from a CSU. Applicants must submit completed applications to the Center for Teaching and Learning (Library Room 510) by February 27, 2006, at 4:00 p.m.

For more information, see the CSU Web site: <http://www.calstate.edu/HR/FLP/> or contact our campus coordinator, Joe Grimes (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088).

Cal Poly Learning Commons Ribbon Cutting Launches Innovative Environment and Services for Students and Faculty

A first step toward creating a Digital Teaching Library, Cal Poly's Learning Commons expands resources and offerings to entire campus.

Cal Poly administrators, deans, faculty, and students were on hand Monday, November 7, for the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Learning Commons, Cal Poly's newest resource for collaborative teaching, learning and research. Developed by a partnership between the Kennedy Library, Information Technology Services (ITS), and the Center for Teaching and Learning, the goal of the Learning Commons is "to create an environment that will foster creative, flexible relationships among students and professors, resources, and technology." A full press release of this event may be found at http://lib.calpoly.edu/news/111405_ribboncutting.html and additional information regarding the Learning Commons may be found at the Learning Commons web site, <http://learningcommons.calpoly.edu/>. Or stop by the new Learning Commons (Kennedy Library second floor) to see for yourself.



CMS - PeopleSoft Student Administration System

A CMS Open Forum for an update on the Student Administration Project will take place on Friday, February 10, 2006, with the time and location to be announced. As Cal Poly continues to implement the PeopleSoft Student Administration System, the faculty, staff, and other users of student data are invited to this forum, that is an excellent opportunity for the campus community to get information on the progress and see a demonstration of the current implementation functionality.

In addition to the February forum, future activities will determine the use of currently available information in the student information system and make every effort to provide that information in the PeopleSoft implementation.

For additional information regarding the Student Administration Project, please refer to the Student Administration website at <http://cms.calpoly.edu/sadmin/index.html>. For further information or to provide ideas, please contact Joe Grimes (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088) or Kimi Ikeda (kikeda@calpoly.edu; 756-2088).



CTL Announcements

Winter 2006 Newer Faculty Update

The Center for Teaching and Learning provides a wide variety of opportunities to support and meet the needs of the newer faculty, including the Newer Faculty Learning Community (NFLC) that began at Cal Poly three years ago. The main objectives of the Newer Faculty Learning Community are to provide a support network (both social and professional) for newer faculty and to foster a sense of community and collegiality on campus. The NFLC has identified and shared experiences in several areas of interest, including describing Cal Poly's culture and how it might be different from other universities; organizing and implementing active learning strategies that foster student participation; teaching effectively; evaluating effective teaching; mentoring students; professional development; navigating the retention, promotion, and tenure process; conducting research at Cal Poly; embracing change; and encouraging high standards.

This past fall, the NFLC met three times to discuss **“Successful Strategies for Creating a Professional Development Plan.”** We began by familiarizing the newer faculty with what constitutes professional development and assisting them in their efforts to set their individual professional development goals. We then discussed strategies for developing a successful plan. The three NFLC coordinators shared their working personnel action files (WPAF) and the materials that they have been using throughout their retention, tenure, and promotion process. At the last meeting, several of the participants brought in the materials they had been developing throughout the quarter to share with and get feedback from their colleagues.

For brand-new faculty, WPAFs are due January 18, 2006. Therefore, at the request of the NFLC participants, we have scheduled our first NFLC meeting of the winter quarter approximately one week prior to this deadline, so the newer faculty can get feedback from the participants.

We enjoyed meeting our brand-new faculty this fall as well as welcoming back our returning newer faculty, and we look forward to continuing our work together. If you were not able to attend any of the meetings this fall, you are still welcome to join the group this quarter! We generally meet from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm on selected Thursdays of the quarter. If you need to leave at noon due to other commitments, we welcome you to attend the first hour.

The three winter quarter Newer Faculty Learning Community meetings have been scheduled on Thursdays with lunch from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm in the Kennedy Library 510B on the following dates:

- **January 12, 2006**
- **February 2, 2006**
- **February 23, 2006**

Registration is encouraged through the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002).

If you have any input or suggestions for initiatives aimed at helping you or other newer faculty members succeed in their roles at Cal Poly, please contact one of the following Newer Faculty Coordinators working with the CTL:

Al Liddicoat	aliddico@calpoly.edu	756-5217
Patricia McQuaid	pmcquaid@calpoly.edu	756-5381
Gwen Fisher	glfisher@calpoly.edu	756-2287

Also, newer faculty may find useful information posted on the Cal Poly New Faculty web resource (<http://www.calpoly.edu/faculty/newfaculty.html>).



Fall Workshops

Building for Sustainability: Environmentally Conscious Planning, Building, and Operations

During the winter quarter the CTL plans to facilitate a workshop entitled “Sustainability: Integrating it into the Curriculum.” During this workshop, a panel will discuss with attendees the best practices for incorporating sustainability in the curriculum/course(s), interdisciplinary approaches to the issue, and other topics of interest to attendees.

The Academic Senate Sustainability Committee is responsible for informing and supporting the activities of other committees whose scope encompasses environmental responsibility, and it makes recommendations to the Academic Senate, as appropriate, regarding the provisions of the Talloires Declaration (a pledge to teach, practice, and improve sound environmental practices) that Cal Poly has signed. Moreover, the infrastructure is being laid at Cal Poly to teach the interdisciplinary courses needed to graduate students who are prepared to deal with issues of sustainability. Many believe that principles of sustainability and their application should be a part of the entire curriculum instead of separated out into a single course.

For more information about environmental issues on campus, visit Cal Poly’s campus Sustainability web site, “Building for Sustainability,” which can be found at <http://www.facilities.calpoly.edu/campusprojects/projects/sustainability/index3.htm>.

For additional information about the CTL “Sustainability” workshop, contact Joe Grimes (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088). Lunch will be served and registration is encouraged. To register, contact the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002).

CTL Workshop: “Using Issues of Aging to Create Intergenerational and Interdisciplinary Ties”

The 2000 US Census reports that there were 35 million people over the age of 65 living in the US, making up about 12% of the population. By 2030, those over 65 will constitute 20% of the population. In California alone, the 11% of older adults in the 2000 population is expected to increase to 17% by 2030. This “Graying of America” has a number of ramifications for Cal Poly students as they consider career options. Although traditional careers in health and human services will need to respond directly to these increases, many other careers will be affected too. For example, issues of aging will be relevant for financial planners, architects and city planners, and those involved with public policy, law, human factors engineering, travel, and recreation.

Those working with older adults, even tangentially, will need to be aware of generational differences in attitudes and spending habits, age changes in physical abilities (such as reaction time, vision, taste, and strength), and the influence of aging on work roles and family dynamics. In addition, technology is expected to play a vital role in helping older adults remain active in their communities.

The Center for Teaching and Learning is offering a workshop on “Using Issues of Aging to Create Intergenerational & Interdisciplinary Ties” presented by Debra Valencia-Laver and Belinda Morrill from the Department of Psychology & Child Development. Participants will be introduced to basic concepts in the study of aging and hear from Cal Poly professors in a variety of disciplines who have effectively used issues of aging to address key concepts in their disciplines.

The “Using Issues of Aging” workshop will take place on January 24, 2006, from 11:00 am until 12:30 pm. For additional information, contact Debra Valencia-Laver (dvalenc@calpoly.edu) or Belinda Morrill (bmorrill@calpoly.edu). Lunch will be served and registration is encouraged. To register, contact the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002).



"Teaching Well" Workshops

Winter 2006 Workshops

The Center for Teaching and Learning will again host the Teaching Well Workshops series for Winter 2006. These interactive workshops will cover a variety of relevant topics to help faculty now and as they prepare for the remainder of the academic year. Workshop topics, listed with their facilitators on the schedule below, include teaching practices, technology integration, and course development.



- January 6:** *Drop-In Session*
Leader: Walt Bremer and Joe Grimes
- January 13:** *Informal Writing*
Leader: Deborah Wilhelm
- January 20:** *Classroom Discussion*
Leader: Doug Keeseey
- January 27:** *Using Technology to Improve Student Learning - Time Lapse Video* Leader: Lou Rosenberg
- February 3:** *Improving Grading Efficiency Using Rubrics for Assessment*
Leader: Roberta Herter
- February 10:** *Meeting Unique Student Learning Requirements*
- February 24:** *Helping Students to Effectively Use the Web, Searching, RSS and Wiki*
Leaders: Walt Bremer, Luanne Fose, and Joe Grimes
- March 3:** *Developing Your Teaching Portfolio*
Leader: James Vilkitis

To register, contact the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002)

Winter Quarter Effective Teaching and Learning Course

This quarter-long course provides faculty with knowledge and skills to enhance their effectiveness as instructors and to promote student learning. Three key outcomes are: that faculty develop steps to enhance student learning, that participants share information about teaching and learning, and that participants work on one or more aspects of a particular course to modify their current teaching practices. Faculty participants provide input on their goals and expectations for the course, and the instructional team (Walt Bremer, David Duran, Sue Elrod, Luanne Fose, Roberta Herter and Joe Grimes) schedules topics, readings, discussions, faculty guest speakers and participant presentations designed to meet these goals. Among past topics:

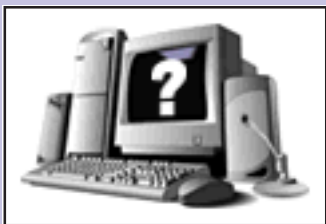
- Student learning styles
- Strategies for course planning and design
- Creating effective teaching methods
- Assessing student learning
- Student support and intervention
- Teaching with technology

The course is open to all faculty, staff, and graduate teaching associates and will meet on each Thursday of the quarter from 9:00 am to 11:00 am in the CTL (Library Room 510). **For more information, see the CTL web site (<http://www.ctl.calpoly.edu/calendar/calendar.html>) or contact Joe Grimes (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088). Space is limited and registration is required. To register, contact the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002).**



CTL Provides lunch; workshop groups meet at 12 noon in the CTL at Kennedy Library, room 510B. Advanced registration is encouraged.

Elearning: Using Really Simple Synchronization Feeds



The capability of the web is expanding continuously, now becoming a two-directional highway with Really Simple Synchronization (RSS) Feeds. These feeds allow both faculty members and students to have tailored facts and/or data delivered to them daily—or even more frequently than that—as if the user subscribed to a newspaper or other daily publication. Moreover, by using cross-referenced feeds, users can increase their confidence in the credibility of the information they obtain.

For students, the RSS feed is a way to receive up-to-date information about a topic in almost any discipline, as well as being a tool that almost all students will need to use in their futures after Cal Poly. Faculty who choose to use this tool with students will need to be sure to explain to students that although technology changes, the guidelines for evaluating credible resources do not change, and that bloggers and others use RSS feeds on their web sites. In addition to using RSS feeds to illustrate principles and concepts, students would also gain from the requirement to bring to class a copy of an RSS abstract—an assurance that they have at least loaded the reader onto their computers.

In order to use an RSS feed, you will need a reader; many are available, and most are free. The readers are relatively small and take only about 2.5 MB of space, like “Feedreader,” which comes with relatively easy instructions and which can be found at <http://www.feedreader.com/>. Another easy-to-use reader is “Pluck,” found at <http://www.pluck.com/pages/rss.html>. When you download a reader, you will be redirected to a web site listing several ISPs. Just choose the one closest to you.

Once the reader is downloaded, users may choose their own favorite feed sources, such as news from CNN, CNET, ESPN, or other sources. To do so, users go to the chosen site and search for an orange-red box with “XML” displayed on it. This box may also have “RSS” next to it, as is the case with CNN.

Consider trying out this new section of the information highway to increase the amount, timeliness, and quality of information available to you and your students. **If you have questions, please contact Joe Grimes (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088)**

9th Regional CSU Symposium on University Teaching

Here is an opportunity for you to share your best practices for teaching and learning, learn about best practices used by others, and give a presentation that will be recognized as refereed. The CTL/Provost pays up to \$275 of expenses (including \$25 registration) if you present (one presenter supported per session) or up to \$150 if you attend.

According to organizers, “The Symposium seeks to recognize and advance excellent instructional practice, to disseminate innovative ideas, to promote collaboration, and to encourage the continued exploration and evaluation of ways that we teach. This year’s program addresses teaching and learning in arts and humanities, social and natural sciences, professional schools, and graduate programs.” Each session will be 30 minutes with 10 minutes for questions and comments after each.

The deadline for proposal submission is February 6, 2006 and the Symposium will be held at CSU Dominguez Hills on April 1, 2006 and additional information may be found at <http://ctl.csudh.edu/csusymposium.htm>. Contact the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002) for travel financial support.

Thanks to the Library!

A key partner in the success of The Center for Teaching and Learning is the Kennedy Library. Thanks to Dr. Hiram Davis, Dean of Library Services, and the library staff for supporting the growing CTL. The library continues to be an exemplary partner in the mission of the CTL.

Share Your Ideas or Research on Teaching and Learning

The CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning invites you to submit research articles, reports, or reviews dealing with scholarly investigations of teaching and learning to *Exchanges: The Online Journal of Teaching and Learning in the CSU*. Go to <http://www.exchangesjournal.org> for more information.

Employee Assistance Offered

A new Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is now available to all employees and their household members. These free EAP services are accessible 24 hours a day, year-round, and include confidential short-term counseling with local health care providers and resource/referral services. Program services, available in English and Spanish, extend beyond work issues to include emotional well-being, substance abuse and recovery, parenting and child care, elder care, money management, and legal assistance.

The new Employee Assistance Program is provided through PacifiCare Behavioral Health, and services are easily accessible to employees and their household members by calling the toll-free number (800) 234-5465 (Username: Cal Poly SLO; Password: help). In addition, an extensive EAP website is available at <http://www.pbhi.com> (Login: Cal Poly SLO; Password: help). Employees should have received an EAP brochure and PacifiCare's Notice of Privacy Practices through campus mail.

Questions regarding the new Employee Assistance Program or upcoming workshops may be directed to the Employment Equity Office at 756-6770.



CTL Resources are for the Entire Campus

If you're a member of the Cal Poly community, the Center for Teaching and Learning is for you. Whether you're on the staff, lecturing part- or full-time, brand-new, on the tenure track, or tenured, call us or stop by to see the many opportunities we offer to enhance your teaching and learning experience as well as the learning experiences of our students.

Faculty Internet Resources

Center for Teaching and Learning: <http://ctl.calpoly.edu>

Faculty Website: <http://www.calpoly.edu/faculty>

Newer Faculty Website: <http://www.calpoly.edu/faculty/newfac/newfac.html>

Message from Joe Grimes (cont.)

- Recognizing the diverse ways that students learn will make you more effective. Visuals, for example, are key to the visual learner and may be worth a thousand words for information transmission.
- Attending to details in quiz and test development, homework assignments, presentations, and handout material will enhance the excitement of the students and go a long way toward strengthening communication.

I recommended that you avoid the cliché and devote a little sweat to “the small stuff” as you travel the road to becoming an excellent teacher. Attention to detail is critical and in teaching, the “small stuff” is significant. Quality attention to the little things is often the difference between just good and superb.

To help you on that road to excellence, we've also been working on our facilities at the CTL. During the fall, our center has seen an increase in use with its attractive new tables, chairs, and laptops. All of these amenities are available for use by the faculty during the times that we are not using them for scheduled events. You are welcome to use our personnel, facilities, and tools to support your work with teaching and learning.

As always, my goal is to be a role model and excellent facilitator of learning for my students, and as the Director of the Center at Teaching and Learning I will do my best to assist the faculty and staff of the campus realize their goals as well. Please contact me (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088) or any of the other CTL faculty members listed on page 8 if you would like assistance from your Center for Teaching and Learning.

A Reading Tip for Your Students and You: The Highlighter is NOT Your Friend!

As a brand-new undergraduate student, I strongly believed in the power of the pen: the highlighter pen, that is. Whether I was riding the city bus to school, “watching” my husband coach Little League, or lounging in my red vinyl bean bag chair at home, I always had my textbook and highlighter. I also carried a backup highlighter, just in case the first one dried out, which happened quite often—no surprise, since I marked more text than I left! And I’m a little embarrassed to admit this, but I even developed a system that required pens of four different colors—yellow, blue, pink, and green—to highlight different types of textual information. At exam time, however, I didn’t find my marks to be very useful, and I had a difficult time selling my books back to the college bookstore. At least my rainbow-colored texts were quite pretty!



Probably you and your students aren’t as extreme “pen abusers” as I was (although I can picture a few of you smiling wryly to yourselves as you read this) but many of us are guilty of indiscriminate highlighting, using the pen from force of habit because it makes us feel like we’re reading more critically than we actually are. For our students, while a highlighter can call attention to material that they want to revisit, more often than not, they end up reviewing the entire text anyway—and the pen just ends up decorating the book. Why? The highlighter doesn’t engage a text. It doesn’t argue. It doesn’t applaud. It doesn’t ask questions. It doesn’t offer analysis or synthesis.

What then *will* accomplish these important reading tasks, tasks with which our students often have difficulty? Think Bic. Try teaching your students (and yourself) the fine and under-appreciated art of marginalia, replacing the blunt felt tip with the sharp point of an ordinary pen or pencil: engage the book, argue with an assertion, note agreement, ask questions, provide summary, offer analysis, or create synthesis. In some classes, I’ve actually forbidden students to use a highlighter; in others, I’ve encouraged them to take their class notes in the text itself; in still others, I’ve taught them to write questions and comments on one side of the page, summary and analysis on the other. Then I encourage students to keep those books for future reference. And all those highlighter pens? They’re great for decorating the margins of plain-paper stationery.

If you’d like some fresh ideas to help your students become better thinkers, readers, or writers, come to one, some, or all of this quarter’s WINGED workshops. Join faculty from across the campus as we discuss ways to enhance our students’ learning and to increase our own delight in teaching. Here are this quarter’s workshops:

- January 10 (Tuesday): Fostering Critical Thinking in Your Classes**
(and helping students think for themselves)
- January 12 (Thursday): Assigned Reading—Getting Students To Tackle It**
(as well as to complete it and understand it)
- January 17 (Tuesday): Using Assignments as Tools to Increase Learning**
(without increasing your own grading load)
- January 19 (Thursday): Receiving Good Written Work from Students**
(through superior assignment design and assessment)
- January 24 (Tuesday): Basic Grammar Review for Faculty**
(no question too big or too small!)
- January 26 (Thursday): Writing Workshop for Faculty**
(clarity, coherence, and other tricky issues)

Each session meets from 3:10-5:00 pm, Library Room 510. For more info or to sign up, contact Deborah Wilhelm (dwillhelm@calpoly.edu; 756-7038) or the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002).

CTL Staff and Faculty Associates

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Fred DePiero	David Duran	Sue Elrod	Gwen Fisher
Luanne Fose	Roberta Herter	Malcolm Keif	Al Liddicoat
Tonia Malone	Pat McQuaid	Deborah Wilhelm	