Letter From the Director

As Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), it is my pleasure to welcome you to the University of Denver. At the CTL, our mission is to support and encourage the University of Denver faculty in the creation of vibrant learning environments.

The CTL offers a variety of faculty development opportunities reviewed in this newsletter. We are very proud of the many services and tools that we support, most of which have emerged from the creative ideas of DU faculty. I encourage you to attend our workshops, apply for some of our grant opportunities, and call, make an appointment, or drop by our offices to take advantage of our resources and knowledgeable staff. Our offices are located on the top floor of Penrose Library, Room 323.

You are invited to participate in the 2007 New Faculty Workshop Series. This workshop series aims to provide relevant information about teaching at DU, discuss effective teaching techniques, and allow you to meet new faculty members from other divisions to develop relationships that will last for years to come. The series will be initiated by an orientation session on September 14th and will continue every Friday morning for five weeks. There will also be a time to meet again during the Winter term to reflect on our experiences.

This newsletter also provides some helpful tips about creating a syllabus and starting your class. The beginning of a new academic year is an exciting time and it is perfectly natural to feel somewhat anxious. I always do. I make a point to begin each class by saying, "Welcome to *my* class. I'm so glad you are here." This simple statment sets the tone that this is my classroom, but that I am here to share it with these students. Students are nervous the first day too and it is amazing the difference a warm welcome can make.

I often advise new faculty members to have their DU portfolio website on display the first day of class. By refering briefly to your website, you not only set a personal tone by sharing a bit of who you are, but you also showcase your credentials. If you need any assistance creating a portfolio site or transferring materials from an existing website, please contact us.

I welcome your feedback and suggestions and look forward to meeting you at the New Faculty Orientation on September 14!

Julanna Gilbert

Faculty Support

The CTL provides many services to DU faculty members including teaching consultations and workshops, funds for teaching projects, instructional design, web application development, and technical training and support.

Funding Opportunities
Contact: Julanna Gilbert
jgilbert@du.edu, x12993

Instructional Design and Distance Learning
Contact: Kathy Keairns, kkeairns@du.edu, x14156
or Alex Martinez, alexmart@du.edu, x14879

DU Portfolio Community
Contact: Carrie Lorenz
clorenz@du.edu, x17719

Blackboard Training & Support
Contact: Kathy Keairns
kkeairns@du.edu, x14156

DU VAGA, ALORA, ECTD
Contact: Alex Martinez
alexmart@du.edu, x14879

Flash & Rich Media Applications
Contact: Joseph Labrecque
Joseph.Labrecque@du.edu, x16566

Teaching Consultations
Contact: Julanna Gilbert, jgilbert@du.edu, x12993
or Bridget Arend, bridget.arend@du.edu, x17885

Laptop & Equipment Loans
Contact: Jeanie Tischler
jtischle@du.edu, x12763

Scanning (slide, text & image)
Contact: CTL helpdesk x12084

Microsoft Office Training
Contact: Mary Sue Brown, UTS
marysue.brown@uts.du.edu, x13690

Classroom Multimedia & AV
Contact: Multimedia Services x13595

CTL Services and Support

Blackboard

Blackboard is an online course management system licensed by DU. Instructors use Blackboard to share information and interact with their students on the Internet. The CTL provides Blackboard workshops, training and support to faculty. These services are not only for beginners, but also for those who wish to develop more interactive courses by integrating building block technologies. We can help you assess your needs, plan your course, learn distance and distributed learning techniques, create or convert content, and use the integrated course tools.

DU VAGA

DU VAGA is a web-based system for finding and organizing high quality images, audio clips, and videos for purposes of presentation or in-depth study. Instructors have access to over 20,000 art and world history images and over 300 library reserve videos and can add their own images and media. Students are able to use a variety of unique tools to explore these materials.

DU Portfolio Community (DUPC)

A DU portfolio is a collection of items (papers, multimedia projects, résumés, images, etc.) that a member of the DU community has uploaded into a personal portfolio website. DU portfolios provide a mechanism for communication and sharing within the DU community as well as with the world beyond the campus. The DU community also uses DUPC to create community sites, course portfolios, and for academic program assessment.

Clicker (Student-Reponse System) Support

Clickers are used to create interactive classrooms through instantaneous student feedback. DU has adopted the TurningPoint student-response system as the officially supported clicker standard and the CTL provides training on the effective use of clickers in the classroom.

Faculty Technology Resource Center

The Faculty Technology Resource Center is located in the CTL office in Penrose Library, room 323. We provide training and support to faculty and other teaching staff on a range of educational technologies. Our list of software is extensive, including the full range of Adobe products and applications for video editing, sound mixing, and image manipulation. We also provide short-term loans of equipment such as laptops, projectors, digital cameras and microphones.

Workshops

The CTL offers occasional seminars, conferences, and workshops on various issues and themes related to teaching and learning each year. In addition, workshop are offered throughout the year to support technological applications and CTL grant programs.

Faculty Grants

The CTL administers two faculty grant programs each year. In the fall, grants are awared for projects that use teaching strategies to improve student engagement and learning. Spring grants are typically allotted to faculty-designed workshops on effective teaching, assessment workshops, and implementing cooperative learning in the classroom. The CTL also supports faculty to present at or attend off-campus teaching and learning conferences and workshops.

Teaching Resources Website

The CTL's website (http://du.edu/ctl) includes a Teaching Resources section with helpful information. The One-Stop Course Materials Guide is a compilation of descriptions and contact information for all the various resources available to DU faculty for creating course material. The site also contains links to articles and websites about college teaching as well as resources specific to teaching at DU.

Easing Students into Your Class

It is often difficult to remember what it was like to be a newcomer to your discipline. Yet students walk in the door to our classrooms each quarter as newcomers, with very little prior knowledge about our subject matter. Research about information processing and learning indicates that new information is retained better if it is tied to existing knowledge. When we learn new information, we fit it into a structure of knowledge that already exists in our heads. If there is little or no structure, it is difficult to correctly retain that information.

Consider beginning your class in a way that allows students to begin to develop a structure, however simple, upon which to 'fit' the information they will learn during the quarter. You might ask questions about what students already know, discuss a common misconception, demonstrate everyday examples, or refresh their memory about concepts and knowledge from prior coursework. Whatever you do, help students ease into your course by providing a conceptual structure they can build on.

Guidelines for Creating an Effective Syllabus

A well prepared course syllabus shows students that you take your courses and your teaching seriously. The syllabus is an essential communication tool between you and your students. It helps clarify course assignments and expectations. Additionally, the process of creating a course syllabus helps you organize your content and formulate the essential learning goals of the course.

Below are some general guidelines to keep in mind when developing your syllabus.

- Create 4-6 general course objectives or outcomes. Think about the essential concepts, knowledge, and disciplinary ways of thinking that your students should learn by the end of the quarter (and you would be embarrased if they did not!).

- Use your course outcomes to structure the course. Try not to get caught up in the "coverage problem" of listing topics and making sure you "cover" as much material as possible. Rather, keep your focus on the different ways that you can convey content and design activities that allow students to achieve the course outcomes.

- Describe your assignments in detail. List the purpose and expectations of your assignments as well as the logistics of when, where, and how they are due. The more detail you provide, the less time you will spend answering these questions in class. Keep track of questions throughout the year and add them to next year's syllabus.

- Err on the side of too much information. Don't expect your students to guess what your expectations are or to know your preferences. Tell them and refer students to the syllabus throughout the quarter. Some faculty members even give a short syllabus quiz the first week of class to reinforce this point.

- Set guidelines and expectations for due dates and classroom behavior, but avoid making the document too authoritative. If you want to encourage students to think creatively and freely in your course, you do not want to start off with a dictatorial and condescending syllabus.

- Talk with other faculty members in your department about expected student workloads, sequencing of courses, faculty expectations and students' general entry-level knowledge.

- Post your syllabus on the web (either in Blackboard or in your course portfolio). DU is a laptop university and students expect to find syllabi on the web. If you post your syllabus online, do not make changes once the course starts without notifying students. Contact the CTL if you need assistance posting your syllabus.

- Share your passion. Although your syllabus should be descriptive and informative, it does not have to be a dry and daunting document. Be sure to convey your enthusiasm about your field and peak students' interest in your course.

In general, a good syllabus is a lengthy document with specific details about the course. But it is also a document in progress that will expand and change from year to year.

Bridget Arend

Please contact the CTL if you would like support developing your syllabi or to see samples of exceptional syllabi from other faculty members. Creating an effective syllabus is one of many topics under discussion during the New Faculty Workshop Series.

Problem Posting

Problem posting is a method of getting students involved and active that can be used in classes of all sizes. For the first class meeting you might say, "Let's see what problems you'd like to tackle during the course. What sort of concerns do you think we might deal with?" or "What are your expectations for this course?" or "What have you heard about this course?"

You might ask students to write for a minute their response to the question and then ask them what they have written…If you feel that some response is ambiguous or too general, you might ask for an example, but you must be ready to accept all contributions…it is crucial that the atmosphere be accepting and nonevaluative. Students should feel that you are genuinely interested in what they have to contribute.

By the end of the problem posting the class normally has become better acquainted, has become used to active participation…and has begun to feel some responsibility for solving their own problems rather than waiting for them to be answered by the instructor.

Excerpt from W. J. McKeachie's Teaching Tips. *All participants in the New Faculty Workshop Series receive a copy of this book.*

Meet the CTL Staff

Julanna V. Gilbert
Director
http://portfolio.du.edu/jgilbert

Julanna is a faculty member in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry with more than 20 years experience in college teaching and scientific research. She is knowledgeable about methods that can be used to improve student engagement and learning, and incorporates them into her own teaching. Julanna is excited about the many opportunities available through the CTL to collaborate with faculty members from across campus.

Jeanie Tischler
Adminstrative Assistant
http://portfolio.du.edu/jtischle

Jeanie has been with the University of Denver for more than ten years, in the alumni office then the geography department, before joining the CTL in 2001. Jeanie enjoys working with faculty members, whether promoting an upcoming seminar, offering advice on a CTL grant, or demonstrating how to use CTL equipment.

Bridget Arend
Research and Assessment Analyst
http://portfolio.du.edu/barend

Bridget has been with DU for nearly 10 years in staff, graduate student, and teaching roles. She comes to the CTL with a background in teaching, instructional design, and faculty development in on-campus and online environments. Bridget is assisting the CTL with evaluation and assessment efforts and teaching consultations.

Kathy Keairns
Senior Instructional Designer
http://portfolio.du.edu/kkeairns

Kathy's responsibilty is Blackboard system administration, training and support. Kathy develops, coordinates and teaches hands-on course management workshops and facilitates online distance learning workshops for DU instructors and staff.

Joseph Labrecque
Educational Multimedia Developer
http://portfolio.du.edu/jlabrecq

Joseph's primary responsibility is the design and development of digital media solutions which enrich both the learning experience of students and also the teaching practice of instructors. Joseph is an experienced Multimedia Developer and ActionScript Programmer with extensive knowledge of standards-based, rich media design.

Jenn Light
Instructional Technology Support Specialist
http://portfolio.du.edu/jlight

Jenn has worked with faculty members on the adoption of educational technology since 1999. She provides training to faculty members and produces documentation for the CTL's instructional technology projects.

Carrie Lorenz
Educational Systems Engineer
http://portfolio.du.edu/clorenz

Carrie works as a software engineer for application development. Her focus is primarily Java, J2EE, SQL, Unix, UML and XML. She is also the lead engineer on the DU Portfolio Community Application.

Alex Martinez
Instructional Designer
http://portfolio.du.edu/alexmart

Alex joined the CTL team in 2002 and has ten years experience in training adult learners. Data management and web application development are two strong technical strengths that Alex brings to the University of Denver. Alex is the lead developer for DU VAGA.

Justin Ryan
Graduate Technology Assistant
http://portfolio.du.edu/jryan32

Justin assists faculty members with training and technological support in the CTL Technology Resource Center. He is pursuing a Master of Music in Carillon Performance at the Lamont School of Music, the only candidate for such a degree in North America.

> **"We teach what we like to learn and the reason many people go into teaching is vicariously to reexperience the primary joy experienced the first time they learned something they loved."**
>
> **- Stephen Brookfield**