Student Learning Enhancement: A faculty driven model
Dr. Vi Rajagopalan

Our faculty is the driving force behind Tri-C. We know we can say that with a lot of confidence and conviction because we have you, the faculty, striving for our students' success. The measure of this success that already exists is a reflection of what you our faculty do, day in and day out. This level of confidence was reflected in the Noel Levitz survey (2002) where students clearly stated that faculty at Tri-C are knowledgeable in their fields, supportive of students in their pursuit of intellectual growth, and willing to extend their support beyond the classrooms.

The above reasons are clearly why your participation is important in the student learning outcomes enhancement process. This process will be useful in planning, conducting, assessing and analyzing our own assessment data to enhance our courses, programs, and the overall outcomes of our students' learning experiences.

Over the past 4 years, I have met several faculty members across the 3 campuses. Many of you have shared the fascinating ways in which you try to reach as many students as you can in a given class. Even as we are quite aware that transforming all students to be active participants is no easy task, yet, many of you do it on a daily basis.

The time has come to share these stories with one another, to continue to build upon each others' strengths and to synergistically build more and more of these learning communities throughout the Tri-C campuses. By being involved in the assessment process, you put yourselves in the drivers' seats and continue to sustain what you do so well; that is, help our students learn. Discussions regarding best practices among faculty can generate models that work well for you at the classroom, program, and even institutional level. Your involvement will further give you the opportunity to generate tools for gathering evidence of your own teaching. Such an approach will guarantee that the end product, which is, making changes based on your own data gathering, will truly reflect and preserve your values and beliefs about teaching.

A faculty-driven curriculum and teaching learning enhancement is in existence everywhere, but what we need is a centralized process for information gathering and sharing. The proposed approach will tap into the existing framework of curriculum development, which has proven to be extremely successful as it includes faculty with their skills and expertise in their disciplines. ATL will provide the required academic tools, and support faculty decisions with regards to gathering evidence about student learning in areas where you the faculty determine as being meaningful. Specifically, ATL members will support faculty in using this evidence to build

Space for Honors Students

The opening of the Metro Honors Activity Room in Humanities 222 was anything but ostentatious as the doors opened for the brightest and the most promising students of Tri-C on November 3rd, 2005.

In fact the celebration began with readings of their own poems by Mr. John Panza, and Dr. Robert E. McDonough. This was followed by refreshments. Although it was a small gathering of students, faculty, and administrators, they were keen and enthusiastic participants. Professor

John Panza, the coordinator of the honors program, hopes and envisions this room to become a place where honors students and faculty from different disciplines can come and spend time working together and exchange ideas.

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an academic culture that thrives on excellence.

The proposed learning enhancement approach will use the existing framework that has proven to be successful:

The Ruth Stiehl model or something similar for generating conversations (this model is discussed in our first issue of the ATL Times).

Follow up with programs and courses that have already generated outcomes to develop assessment tools.

ATL and curriculum mentors will work closely to help faculty in those programs and courses to focus on one or two most important outcomes, and then generate rubrics or other measurement tools to capture student learning.

The next step would be for those faculty members to go back and have conversations around the rubrics/tools generated with various other faculty members in their discipline or program to establish a collective understanding of generally accepted methods of assessing learning.

Faculty and program coordinators will facilitate the implementation of the assessment tools in gathering evidence/data in their course or program.

The final step in this process would involve the use of the findings to enhance the teaching/learning process. The ATL and the Academic Performance Quality Systems office will play a major role in providing the supports in this area.

The implementation of this model/approach will help align the learning outcomes assessment process with the work done previously by curriculum mentors who worked with voluntary faculty and academic staff that chose to redo their curriculum. It will be the next step (backwards) in the Ruth Stiehl model. We could combine the two activities, generating outcomes and assessment tools in the same session.

This approach is beneficial to faculty because it builds upon our existing framework and has the potential to lead to teaching excellence and curriculum enhancement. As we have seen in our other outcomes sessions, vibrant conversations can be generated when we bring faculty together and provide them with Post It notes!

Defining the Assessment Process: Feedback from Critical Thinking Pilot Project

Alliance for Teaching and Learning is pleased to inform that our phase one initiative of implementing the pilot project relating to the critical thinking core competency has been completed. As you remember, we had asked for your assistance in developing a method for assessing the critical thinking skills of our students. Subsequently, the Alliance for Teaching and Learning (ATL) sponsored an outcomes assessment session with Dr. Ruth Stiehl back in November of 2004. In this session, Dr. Stiehl facilitated a conversation among a small group of faculty and administrative staff that resulted in the development of a scoring guide for assessing critical thinking. Faculty in a few disciplines namely, Mathematics, Psychology, Environmental Health and Safety, Biology, Political Science and History used this guide to determine whether they are successfully including these important critical thinking skills in the particular course they were teaching that semester. The ATL is now requesting you to be part of the discussion group consisting of faculty members who will share their experiences in implementing this scoring guide. We invite you to participate in this discussion so we may obtain the best information possible from your insights, expertise, and interest in the area of critical thinking.

We believe that this scoring guide is only one component in the overall process of student outcomes assessment. Our next step would involve validating and refining additional core competencies and developing a scoring guide that can be used by faculty to provide consistent feedback to students, measure student learning, and use the findings to enhance teaching and learning. If you wish to participate in this discussion session, please contact Dr. Don Killeen, Associate Dean, Liberal Arts, Metro Campus, or Mr. Rob Stuart, Director, Institutional Research, at 4757. Once they obtain a list of participants, they will schedule the session at a time and place which is convenient to as many people as possible.
Excellent teachers create student-centered classrooms at Tri-C

What do the five faculty members recognized for their teaching excellence by the Ohio magazine have in common?

Yes! It is their passion for teaching, desire to be able to reach out to all students and still be able to maintain their passion for the subject and other related activities as well. Each of the five faculty members when interviewed spoke about their own teaching and what they think is important in creating a healthy classroom environment in their virtual or traditional classroom settings.

**Dr. Valerie Brown, Professor of Sociology**

“Good teachers are all around us”

Although Dr. Brown has numerous awards and recognitions for her work in community partnerships, secured grants, applied new technology to enhance teaching, and created stimulating assignments for Gerontology students, she humbly said that there are so many others at Tri-C who could easily be recognized for some of the same accomplishments.

**Dr. Robert McDonough, Professor of English**

“Teacher–student relationship is mysterious…..”

Dr. McDonough professor of English shared his ideas about the role of teachers in motivating students to be successful in their academic endeavors. To him, the student teacher relationship is as mysterious as the parent – child relationship; both occur quite naturally and are focused on the growth and development of the individual. Therefore, he does not hesitate to provide feedback to students to indicate the areas of excellence or good work, but not without pointing out that there is still room for improvement in other areas as well. His use of the portfolio method of assessment reflects this philosophy and enables the students to monitor their own progress as well as improve as they receive feedback from him. With regards to his bright students, he believes that the Honors curriculum is essential because it actually addresses the needs of the academically creative and high performing individuals who may be at risk of dropping out otherwise.

**Mr. Samuel Lipuma, Instructor of Philosophy**

“Professors can create excitement in students that textbooks by themselves aren’t able to do”

Professor Lipuma the Philosophy professor well recognized as “The paperless professor,” is also known for making his web class and the traditional classroom setting student-centered and user-friendly. He says the true testament of higher learning is when a student tells him that he or she had not thought of it in that way before. He added, “I am inspired by the idea that I can actually make people look at the world as they may not have looked at in the past!”

For example, “diversity is an ethical issue because promoting tolerance is consistent with our culture. But in promoting tolerance one will begin to understand that there will be a point in the continuum when tolerance can no longer be accepted.”

As a paperless professor, he uses the web and multimedia presentations in his lectures both on the web and in the classroom, but warns that one should integrate power point presentations to their teaching style and not the other way round. Learning to be an effective teacher for professor Lipuma comes from years of shaping and developing his own skills and teaching style based on student feedback and evaluations. “Sometimes you have to give up what you think was effective for what students think helps them in their learning,” he added. Finally, the advantage professors have over text books, according to Lipuma, is that, “while text books are dry and written for everyone, professors can incorporate their own stories and make the subject matter exciting for students.”

**Dr. Brain Zoldessy, Assistant Professor of Theater**

“I see the class as an orchestra with me as the conductor…..”

One is familiar with the usual show biz success story of a struggling artist making it in LA and reaching stardom in Hollywood. But for Dr. Zoldessy it was doing odd jobs, working in restaurants and incidentally helping a friend prepare for a monologue for a job interview in the theater that made him realize that he was made to be a teacher! So in his 30’s he found himself back in the education track to obtain a graduate degree to enable him to teach at the college level.

Surprisingly only one professor in his graduate studies really talked about teaching. Dr. Zoldessy’s advice to anyone who wants to be in the teaching profession is to take a trip back into his or her own educational experience and try to remember specifically what was good about the good teachers and what was bad about the ones who were not very effective as teachers. This approach has given him the insight into his own teaching approach, and he bases his own teaching on how he would like to be taught the course.

His insightful analogy of a class as an orchestra with him as the conductor

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Community Collaborations

West Creek Rehabilitation due to Tri-C Biology Professor’s Efforts

Terry Greathouse, Biology professor, has been working with his students for the past few years to rehabilitate 2 acres of West Creek that was adjoining a dumping area. West Creek is located in the city of Parma. On July 21, 2005, the Cleveland Metro Parks and the city of Parma signed a 99-year lease to take over the area as part of the Metro Parks. Professor Greathouse has formed a beneficial relationship between the park and the college resulting in him being able to teach classes at the new education center to be built in West Creek. Due to this affiliation, Professor Greathouse has developed internships for his students throughout the Metro Parks system. Zoo Rangers are also included in these internships.

This collaboration between Tri-C and the Cleveland Metro Parks benefits the students and the residents who use the park system. Professor Greathouse’s cooperative efforts in the revitalization are a great example of Tri-C teamwork and service learning within the community.

Teams Make Taxes Less Taxing for Tri-C and the Community

Professors Vicki Vorell, Linda Muren, Dr. Larry Roman, and Jin Chen are a “tax team” that has been administering free tax clinics. A few years ago, the program began at the West Campus as VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance). The program has continued to evolve and broaden into more of a community service. In partnership with the Internal Revenue Service, Tri-C has provided free tax assistance to the students, staff, faculty, and community at large. The IRS provides the tax software for clinic and curriculum materials for volunteer training. Volunteers are trained by the tax team and have prepared basic federal, state, and local tax returns. The College has provided the materials and services in the way of computer access, printers, supplies and space to complement the IRS contributions.

Over 300 returns have been prepared at the Western Campus this year and over 100 this year at the Eastern Campus. The project has franchised to the Eastern Campus with Dr. Larry Roman at the helm. It is in the plans for Marty Walsh, an instructor in Information Technology, to facilitate the process for Metro Campus to have its own tax clinic next year. The volunteers have donated many hours to the community through this project. The volunteer sacrifices are great, but the rewards are many. During the tax clinic volunteers have an opportunity to share the College mission and information about programs with its clients. Positive dialogue has occurred where the taxpayers, who are potential students, also learn about the curriculum and the significant role that Tri-C plays in the community. Student volunteers have achieved “real world” on the job training and experience in the demanding, fast-paced field of taxation. The volunteers talk with seniors about how much the College appreciates the support they provide through passing levies. All services of the clinic are free to taxpayers whose tax situation aligns with the skill of the clinic. Continued support of Cuyahoga Community College and its services to the community are thoroughly encouraged with this project. The tax clinics allow for the community to positively experience Tri-C even without taking a class.

Dr. Vorell with volunteer students from the “tax team”
A pilot aimed at improving performance in the first semester Developmental Algebra course (Math 0950) was developed and launched by Eastern Campus Math faculty Linda Franko and Dr. Heather Snell-Masterson. A two-credit math survival skills course was offered concurrently with Beginning Algebra I (Math 0950) in fall semester 2005. The focus of the course is on changing student attitudes and feelings about math. Information and methods for self-motivation, study skills, overcoming math anxiety, critical thinking skills, personal self-management skills, and other topics important to success in mathematics are conveyed. Self reflection and personal growth in the course allowed students to believe that they can learn mathematics. A new motivation for students to commit to positive, purposeful actions that ensure their success in math and in a more global perspective was encountered. Improvements in success have been seen for students who experience the new course.

The optimism and improvement in student success has spurred new sections to be offered concurrently with the other Developmental Algebra courses collegewide. Professor Deborah Massari and Associate Dean Guy Hutt have launched pilot sections at the Western Campus in the spring semester 2006. During fall of 2006, the Metro Campus will be initiating pilots with the aid of Professor Donna McNatt.

Now Math 0800 is part of the Achieving the Dream initiative under the leadership of the Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Jacquelyn Joseph-Silverstein. The Achieving the Dream initiative will support the expansion of the math survival skills course, analyze and monitor the progress of student improvement experienced as a result. More mathematics faculty will become involved in the expansion and the reach for student success broadened in the process.

**What is ahead of us?**

ATL is currently redesigning its website and welcomes suggestions from you. The website is intended to provide information about our faculty and their success stories, as well as publish articles relating to best practices in teaching, learning, and student achievement. We look forward to your participation in the development of this site as well as your contribution to the ATL Newsletter. Visit our website at [http://infonet.tri-c.edu/atl/](http://infonet.tri-c.edu/atl/) for contact information and other resources.
brought out the richness in his approach to diversity at all levels. He went on to explain that the class comes together and makes music although everyone may have a different instrument. Theater reaches every member of the audience and transcends cultural and linguistic differences. “My students learn this through their hands on experience in my class where they have to create various pieces from the assigned scripts.”

Dr. Norma Hernandez de Gatica, Professor of Chemistry

*Her passion comes through in making chemistry exciting for her students.******

Dr. Gatica, as she is known to her students has won numerous awards for advancing her discipline. More recently, the Technical Societies Council of the Niagara Frontier named her the 2003 inventor of the year. Chemistry is not an easy subject to teach and making it exciting for all students is even harder. Understanding this about her students has made her sensitive to their needs. She puts a lot of effort in creating an atmosphere that helps students to be less apprehensive and more open to experiencing the subject matter of Chemistry in her classes.

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**Space for Honors Students**

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Events that are planned for the Honors room are: movie nights, discussions and presentations of projects by students. The Honors room is open from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Mr. Panza and Dr. McDonough said that these events were open to everyone in the Tri-C community. The Honors Activity Room at East officially opened in December 2005. Similarly, faculty and honor student volunteers will enable the room to be open Monday through Friday.

As of December of 2005, we have 40 students who have been accepted into the Honors program, across the three campuses. Active recruiting by the campus honors coordinators and a post card mailing helped in the students’ enrollment in the program.

There have already been several events held in the rooms, thanks to the faculty who have agreed to monitor the rooms on a regular basis on the two campuses.

Several committees of the Honors Advisory Board have begun meeting and planning. These include: Honors Curriculum, Experiential Learning Activities, and Extra-Curricular Activities. According to Mr. Bob Searson from the Office of Academic Programs, the positive energy of the members of these committees is vital in organizing and facilitating events that meet the needs of our honors students.

According to Mr. Searson, some limited honors scholarships were provided for the spring 2006 semester to offset the tuition cost of honors classes for the program members. He said, this not only helps support our members, but should also help build enrollment in our Honors classes.

If you have any questions about the Honors Program, or wish to get more involved with the planning and implementation, don’t hesitate to call, or talk with your campus honors coordinator:

East—John Panza, Instructor, English

Metro—Bob McDonough, Professor, English

West—Karl Krumroy, Instructor, Philosophy