Teaching Matters

Great Teaching . . . by Design

Issue No. 38 University of Waterloo Winter 2012

# Instructional Vitality – Time for Re-Awakening

In writing the lead article for our newsletter each term, I enjoy taking an hour or two to sit back and think about the message I want to deliver. What can make a difference to Waterloo’s teachers? For this article, a recent Chronicle of Higher Education article entitled: “Psst: Don’t Tell Anyone, but Some Professors Like Teaching” reminded me of a book that I acquired earlier this year from Maryellen Weimer, our Opportunities and New Directions keynote speaker. Her book, Inspired College Teaching, did just that – it inspired me to think about how I might inspire you. In the book, Weimer (2010) shares various messages from the research literature and stories from her own teaching career. But one concept that really caught my eye as we head into the doldrums of winter was that of “instructional vitality”. Weimer asks some compelling questions to help assess how tired our teaching has become:

* Is your energy in the classroom and with students less than it should be?
* How long has it been since you have changed the syllabus for that frequently taught course?
* Do you greet instructional innovations, new curricula programs, and assessment initiatives with interest and enthusiasm?
* If a new colleague asks for advice on teaching, how much of your response is positive? (direct quotations from pp.188-189)

A lack of instructional vitality leaves us feeling drained and unable to be fully present when teaching. Weimer writes about how easy it can become to just go through the motions of teaching because we know our content inside out and we’ve heard most answers to the questions we ask students. So how do we keep our teaching fresh and regain our vitality as a teacher?

Weimer gives us a few options:

* Take more control in your institutional environment – Seek to have conversations and make contributions that increase your enthusiasm for teaching. You could serve on a curriculum committee or lead a conversation at a department meeting about teaching-related ideas.
* Believe in the power of change – Offer to teach a new course, try a new instructional method, or adopt a new text. Weimer acknowledges that it can be hard to contemplate a change when you’re tired, but she reminds us that a change need not be large and can be just what’s needed to “uplift and refresh what has grown tired” (p.192).
* Seek new ideas – Read a teaching-related article or book (lots are available to the Waterloo community through CTE and the library), share ideas with colleagues, or take a workshop on teaching. CTE offers lots of support in this area – check out our homepage to view what’s available and read this issue of the newsletter!
* Become aware of what you believe about teaching and learning – This idea may feel like the least concrete, but it’s the lynchpin in initiating rejuvenation. Various researchers have identified a limited number of conceptions that fall on a continuum from teacher-transmission focused to student-learning focused – the online [Teaching Perspectives Inventory](http://teachingperspectives.com) will give you some insights into your awareness of the options. An interesting article by Åkerlind (2003) provides further insights into different conceptions of teaching as well as teaching development.

I also agree heartily with another of Weimer’s statements: “making students and what they are doing the focus of the classroom changes the teacher’s role dramatically…The script is less fixed and the action much more spontaneous, but that is exactly the challenge many experienced teachers need” (p.213). Giving students more control over their learning can be rejuvenating for everyone. And remember, if you want to bounce around some new ideas, we’re here to help.

References:

Åkerlind, G. (2003). Growing and developing as a university teaching - variation in meaning. Studies in Higher Education, 28(4), 375-390.

Berrett, D., (November 21, 2011). Psst: Don’t tell anyone, but some professors like teaching. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved online.

Weimer, M. (2010). Inspired College Teaching: A Career-Long Resource for Professional Growth. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Donna Ellis

# Teaching Excellence Academy (TEA)

Are you looking for new ideas to include in your revised course syllabus? The four-day Teaching Excellence Academy may just be what you need!

**Dates:** Wednesday, April 18, Thursday, April 19, Friday, April 20, and Monday, April 23, 2012

**Location:** St. Paul’s University College

Your Chair/Director must recommend you for the Teaching Excellence Academy.

# Statistics on Learning LEARN (D2L)

Over 1,300 individuals in the How to Use Waterloo LEARN course

Over 470 individuals completed Getting Started in LEARN (CTE656) sessions

Over 60 individuals dropped by the LEARN Drop-In Sessions to get information.

# LEARN’s Learning Object Repository (LOR)



**What is a Learning Object Repository? Did we have one before?**

Jane: We’re very excited that D2L has a Learning Object Repository (LOR), similar, but more prominently placed than the one that we had in UWACE. The LOR in LEARN allows instructors to store and share learning resources that they have created in their LEARN courses as well as other documents and files. Modules, topics, quizzes and files (e.g., word documents, pdf files) can be published to the LOR and then used in other courses. When instructors publish an object to the LOR they can designate the object as “hidden” or private to be used only in their own courses, or make the resource publically available, so that other members of the University of Waterloo LEARN community can search for and use the object in their courses. We’re hoping to have all the publically available peer-reviewed activities that were in the UW-ACE Instructor Resources Repository available for instructors in a special “Instructor Resources” section of the LOR to use in their courses by the spring.

**What sort of resources did we have in the Instructor Resources Repository in UW-ACE?**

Jane: In the past we had peer-reviewed learning activities, for example a learning styles inventory exercise for students and a plagiarism quiz, that could be copied into other courses and modified to suit particular course objectives. We also had html page layout templates and other teaching resources for instructors. We are hoping to be able to share some html layouts that could be used to create pages in courses and the peer-reviewed activities though the special “Instructor Resources” section of theLOR.

**What are the benefits of using the repository?**

Jane: Instructors can reduce workload and increase the ease of reuse of content or resources across courses and terms by creating their own private or hidden items. A particular module, topic or document that that is used in all their courses can be stored in the LOR and linked to or copied into each course. If you link to an object, changes can be made to a single copy of the resource instead of having to change it in every course or section that uses it each term.

 The same efficiencies can be realized if groups of instructors share resources across programs or courses. Documents or activities that are used in many courses within a program or a department can be made publically available through the University of Waterloo General Repository.

We hope that having access to the peer-reviewed activities that they can copy into their courses and modify to suit their needs will be a benefit to instructors as well.

**So, how do we find this new LOR?**

Jane: You can connect to the LOR to retrieve objects from the LEARN system home page, or from the Manage Content area and the Import/Export/Copy Components area of your course. Instructors can also retrieve objects and perform advanced searches including searches for learning objects that are in an external repository called Merlot (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching) in these areas.

Jane Holbrook

# Opportunities and New Directions Conference 2012:

# Fostering Deep Approaches to Learning

**Thursday, April 26, 2012**

Twelve-week terms. Thousands of students rotating through co-op terms off campus. Larger classes limiting course delivery and assessment options. These and other factors could easily result in students moving across the surface of learning rather than delving more deeply into disciplinary or interdisciplinary ways of creating, questioning and validating knowledge. Yet at Waterloo, examples abound of engaged students doing impressive work in spite of – or even as a result of – these constraints. Deeper approaches to learning in which students retain and apply knowledge in new contexts, make connections, transform their ways of seeing and being in the world, and motivate themselves and others to engage in critical and analytical thinking are evident in every Faculty.

Whether it be at the program, course, assignment, or single class level, what have you tried that has led to deeper approaches to learning? As participants in this year’s conference, we want you to leave with practical tools and rationales that you can adapt to your own disciplinary setting.

For OND 2012, we invite you to report on formal investigations into teaching practices as well as to share information about practical instructional approaches.

Possible topic areas include:

* Assignments and activities that engage your students and inspire them to think deeply
* Undergraduate research opportunities in or out of the classroom
* Making co-op or other hands-on experiences more meaningful
* Using curriculum review to promote deeper learning
* Measuring deep and surface approaches in courses or across programs
* Exploring/questioning limits of deep vs. surface learning as a framework

This year we welcome you to propose one of four ways (showcase, workshop, poster or paper) to share a teaching method or an assessment tool that you have found fosters a deep approach to learning. Both sharing practices and formal research on teaching have considerable value, helping us to develop usable knowledge to enhance our teaching practices. For this year’s conference format we are providing two tracks: 1. sharing practices and 2. research. Proposals are due **Monday, February 27, 2012**. Watch the [OND website for updates](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/research_on_teaching_and_learning/index.html?tab=5).

***Sharing Practices***

*Showcase: 15-20 minutes*

Share a teaching method or an assessment approach that fosters deep learning in your context

*Workshop: 50 minutes*

Take your audience through a real example of your teaching or assessment approach with some hands-on time built in

*Poster*

Present a tool or technique and interact with attendees during our poster session

***Research***

*Formal Paper: 15-20 minutes*

Present empirical findings or contemplate theoretical or methodological issues related to research on student learning at the course or program level

*Poster*

Present empirical findings and interact with attendees during our poster session

All proposals will be vetted by the conference organizing committee; submissions in the research track will undergo blind peer review.

**Wednesday, April 25, 2012**

*Pre-conference workshop: Designing student research opportunities for deeper learning*

Brad Wuetherick (University of Saskatchewan) and Marcy Slapcoff (McGill University) lead a half-day workshop on embedding the teaching-research link into your own course in small or more substantial ways. For this hands-on experience, bring a syllabus from an existing course or ideas for a course you are planning to teach.

Trevor Holmes

# CTE Comes Together in EV1

At long last, we are all together! Both of our former locations relocated to EV1 this fall. The MC 4055 location relocated early in October and the Dana Porter location followed with its move taking place late in November.

Our new home is in EV1 on the third floor and this move marks the first time that all CTE staff will be together in the same building. This consolidation of two separate locations into one new home will aid in our endeavour to build a community both for those of us that work here and for our various visitors whether they be faculty, graduate students, staff instructors or people from other universities. Our various offices are distributed in a “U” shape (from EV1 303 to EV1 327) around our centrally located reception area in EV1 325 which also houses our library collection and meeting rooms. Our director, Donna Ellis, is located in EV1 320.

In our September 2011 issue of Teaching Matters, Trevor Holmes invited you, our readers, to contribute your thoughts on how we could make our new home a “welcoming” spot to visit and spend time. We encourage you to share your ideas by sending an email Trevor Holmes or email Monica Vesely and help us shape our new environment to best serve your needs and preferences!

Please monitor [the CTE website](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca) for an announcement about our upcoming Open House event currently being planned in February to show off our new “digs”!

Monica Vesely

# Teaching Awards

Tips on writing a persuasive nomination letter can be found in Trevor Holmes’ blog entry [‘How to Write an Effective Nomination Letter’](http://cte-blog.uwaterloo.ca/?p=9).

[Distinguished Teacher Awards](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_awards_and_grants/index.html?tab=1) are given in recognition of a continued record of excellence in teaching at the University of Waterloo. Nomination deadline: Friday, February 3, 2012.

[Amit & Meena Chakma Awards for Exceptional Teaching by a Student](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_awards_and_grants/index.html?tab=1) are given in recognition of excellence in teaching by students registered at the University of Waterloo. Nomination deadline: Friday, February 10, 2012

# Task Force Report Overview: Innovative Teaching

# Practices to Promote Deep Learning

In June 2011, an 8-member task force released the culmination of a 6-month project to identify innovative teaching practices used here and elsewhere that promote deep learning in order to facilitate the adoption of more new practices at Waterloo. The full report can be found on CTE’s website ([The Task Force on Innovative Teaching Practices to Promote Deep Learning at the University of Waterloo: Final Report](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources/documents/Task%20Force%20Report%20on%20Deep%20Learning.pdf)).

While the report does include examples of various innovative practices both at the course and institutional level, what really captured the imaginations and interest of the task force members was the end product of “deep learning”. “Isn’t this just real learning?”, one committee member asked. What really is deep learning and do we see this approach being used by all of our students?

Deep learning is characterized by students retaining and applying knowledge in new contexts, being able to relate ideas and make connections, seeing the world differently, and regulating themselves as learners. Deep learners use critical thinking skills to create their own meanings, engage actively in their learning, and are intrinsically motivated to learn. This type of learning compares to surface learning which involves rote memorization of unquestioned, discrete facts – the “binge and purge” approach that gets talked about every term at exam time (adapted from p.6 of the report).

The task force members focused on articulating ideas to help create an institutional culture that is focused on student learning and where effective teaching is seen to promote deep learning. The result of our discussions was the creation of 8 objectives with supporting recommendations and action items. The main objectives are as follows:

* Communicate a university-wide statement promoting deep learning
* Enhance new faculty support
* Expand department chair support and training
* Build a community of faculty leaders focused on teaching and learning
* Improve internal and external communications about effective innovative teaching
* Reconceptualize the teaching grants program
* Engage Waterloo’s instructors in a university-wide event
* Promote the strategic use of intensive teaching development activities

The report was presented to Waterloo’s senior administrators this past fall and was received positively. Already some of the action items are being acted upon. For example, CTE has hired a new instructional developer to assist with new faculty professional development programming. The Opportunities and New Directions (OND) conference is being re-focused to include both research- and practice-based sessions, with the intention of attracting many more Waterloo faculty members (see the article on OND for more details). The LIF and PIF grant programs are also being revised to solicit a broader array of projects to encourage innovative practice (the call for proposals will be released in the Winter term).

Watch for more details about how other elements of the task force report recommendations are being implemented to promote a culture of student learning at Waterloo.

Donna Ellis

# Welcoming Julie as a CTE Instructional Developer

[**Julie Timmermans**](http://www.cte.uwaterloo.ca/who_we_are/bios/JulieTimmermans.php)



As Instructional Developer – Consulting and Research, Julie provides confidential teaching consultations for faculty members and instructional staff in areas, such as course design, delivery, and evaluation. She also supports faculty and staff with designing, implementing, and disseminating results from pedagogical research projects. Prior to joining the Centre for Teaching Excellence, Julie worked at McGill University’s Teaching and Learning Services, where she was involved in the Course Design and Teaching Workshop, graduate education initiatives, and teaching consultations. She also taught Effective Communication courses at McGill. Julie recently completed a PhD in Instructional Psychology and Higher Education. In her thesis, she explored the notion of development as it applies to student learning and to the work of educational developers, by drawing on the exciting research on threshold concepts. Outside of work, Julie and her husband love playing at the park with their two young children.

**Recent Publication**

Timmermans, J. (2010). Changing our minds: The developmental potential of threshold concepts. In J.

H. F. Meyer, R. Land., & C. Baillie (Eds.), *Threshold concepts and transformational learning*. Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense.

**Selected Recent Peer-Reviewed Presentations and Invited Workshops**

Weston, C., Winer, L., Berthiaume, D., & Timmermans, J. (2010, June). *Levels of agency in educational*

*development.* Workshop facilitated at the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED): Enhancing Strategies for Global Quality Learning in Higher Education, Barcelona, Spain.

Timmermans, J. & Weston, C. (2009, August). *Identifying potential threshold concepts in Educational*

*Development: Towards a profile of professional Educational Developers*. Paper presented at the 13th Biennial Conference of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

**Selected Fellowships and Awards**

SSHRC National Doctoral Fellowship

FQRSC Doctoral Research Scholarship

**“If you are looking for concrete ways to infuse new vitality into your teaching, please join your colleagues from across the University for the Opportunities and New Directions (OND) Conference on Thursday, April 26, 2012.”**

# Welcoming Monica as a CTE Instructional Developer

[**Monica Vesely**](http://www.cte.uwaterloo.ca/who_we_are/bios/MonicaVesely.php)



Monica brings fifteen years of teaching experience focusing on student engagement and instructional development to her role as Instructional Developer - Curriculum and Programming. Prior to joining the Centre for Teaching Excellence, Monica worked with the NSERC Chair in Water Treatment in Civil and Environmental Engineering, taught in the Department of Chemistry, and designed learning experiences with Waterloo's Professional Development Program. Monica is a certified Instructional Skills Facilitator and she will be focused on helping new faculty with their teaching roles through programming initiatives. In addition, Monica is available for confidential consultations on pedagogy and teaching observations for all faculty and instructional staff to help develop and improve teaching and learning practices. In her free time, Monica embraces the winter by skiing, skating and curling.

**Recent Teaching, Support and Facilitation Activities**

Instructional Skills Workshop, August 16-19, 2011, Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo.

PD2: Critical Reflection and Report Writing, Spring 2011, Waterloo Professional Development Program, University of Waterloo.

CHEM 237L: Introductory Biochemistry Laboratory, Winter and Spring 2011, Department of Chemistry, University of Waterloo.

CHEM 335L: Advanced Biochemical Laboratory, Winter 2011, Department of Chemistry, University of Waterloo.

# Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW)

In the Winter 2012 term, the ISW (CTE 601) is scheduled:

Tuesday, February 21, Wednesday, February 22, Thursday, February 24 and Friday, February 25, 2012. 9:30 am to 3:30 pm (24 hours), EV1 242

The Instructional Skills Workshop is a 24-hour series of microteaching sessions with peer feedback. It leads to a widely-recognized Certificate and includes instruction in learning theories as well as considerable application and practice.

Please register at [myHRinfo](https://uwaterloo.ca/human-resources/) for courses offered by the Centre for Teaching Excellence.

# New Graduate Instructional Developers (GIDs)

**Chad Gooyers**



Chad Gooyers is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Waterloo. His dissertation research is focused on the etiology of intervertebral disc injury in the lumbar spine under repetitive, submaximal loading. Before pursuing his doctorate, Chad completed a Master of Science degree at Queen’s University and a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology at Waterloo. Along with his involvement with the Centre for Teaching Excellence, Chad currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Ontario Kinesiology Association, is the Student Representatives for the Canadian Society of Biomechanics, and is the current President of the University of Waterloo Kinesiology Graduate Student Association.

As a Graduate Instructional Developer, Chad is responsible for observing teaching events, facilitating workshops and providing feedback and support for participants in the Certificate in University Teaching program. Since 2007, Chad has held nine teaching assistantships and has also worked as a co-instructor while studying at Queen’s. It is from these experiences that he has developed a keen interest in pedagogy, effective presentation skills, and the different techniques that can be applied in effective higher education teaching.

**Arash Shahi**



Arash completed his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in the Structural field of Civil Engineering at University of Waterloo. He is a holder of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada Alexander Graham Bell Graduate Scholarship (NSERC-CGS) and is now in the last term of his PhD studies in the field of Construction Management.

Arash has been at the University of Waterloo for over nine years. He has worked as a sessional instructor in the Civil Engineering department, a teaching assistant for six courses, and has been a collaborator with CTE in various capacities since January of 2010. Arash also completed the CUT program in 2010 and believes that it has greatly complemented his love for teaching. He is very excited to return to CTE to share his enthusiasm and experiences with the program!

# GID News



CTE is pleased to announce that Plinio Morita, a Graduate Instructional Developer with CTE, was nominated for the [Sandford Fleming Teaching Assistantship Excellence Award](http://www.eng.uwaterloo.ca/~sff/) in Spring 2011. The award was presented to him on November 17, 2011. In addition to this award, we are also pleased to announce that Plinio was just awarded a [Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship](http://www.vanier.gc.ca/eng/home-accueil.aspx).

# The CTE Blog: An Overview of Recent Posts

CTE has maintained a blog devoted to exploring ideas about teaching and learning since 2008, with new posts appearing twice a week. The past few months have seen some excellent and thought provoking posts, on topics ranging from student motivation to teamwork skills; from teaching biology to fostering academic integrity; from the limitations of rubrics to the introduction of Waterloo’s new learning management system; and from connecting with our students to recognizing that assessment is - and should be - a deeply emotional experience. Our blog has featured many posts from CTE staff, but also from faculty members, such as the English Department’s Aimée Morrison, and from senior administrators, such as Bruce Mitchell. We’ve also started to use our blog to generate an RSS feed, so that audio versions of our highly popular “Teaching Tips” documents can be syndicated to iTunes as podcasts. If you haven’t yet checked out the CTE blog, I encourage you to do so. You’re sure to find something that will invigorate what and how you think about teaching and learning.

Mark Morton

# Annual CTE Research CV

During 2011, staff at the Centre for Teaching Excellence engaged in various research activities. In the Centre’s Annual Research CV, staff members gave invited presentations/workshops in addition to publishing in peer-reviewed journals and presenting at teaching and learning conferences. Of special note, Mark Morton, Senior Instructional Developer - Emerging Technologies, facilitated workshops at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from May 1 to May 30, 2011.

Verna Keller

# Course Internationalization Grants

Waterloo International and the Centre for Teaching Excellence are pleased to announce that Course Internationalization Grants, at $1,500 each, are open to full-time faculty members at the University of Waterloo. For more information, contact Svitlana Taraban-Gordon.

Grant applications are accepted year round, subject to availability of funds.

# Teaching Series for Postdoctoral Fellows

At the end of the Fall term, CTE hosted the third offering of the [Teaching Development Series](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/post_doc_programs/index.html) for uWaterloo postdoctoral fellows. This one-week intensive program, offered once a term, comprises 6 teaching seminars that last 1.5-2 hours each. Visit the CTE website for [details regarding the availability of the next session](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/events_registration/index.html?tab=3). Registration is limited to 20 participants.

Darlene Radicioni

# Congratulations to CTE Fall 2011 Grads!

The following 7 students completed the [Certificate in University Teaching program](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/graduate_programs/index.html?tab=1) in Fall 2011: Eman Almehdawe (ENG), Robert Fraser (MATH), Bertina Lee (ENG), Rhys McKinnon (ARTS), Afsaneh Nabifar (ENG), Ishari Waduwara-Jayabahu (SCI) and Julia Woodhall (ARTS).

In addition to CUT graduates, 25 graduate students completed the [Fundamentals of University Teaching program](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/graduate_programs/index.html?tab=2) in Fall 2011. The numbers by department are: Applied Health Sciences 1, Arts 4, Engineering 15, Environment 1, and Science 4.

Darlene Radicioni

# Thank You!

As part of the CUT program, faculty members are asked by graduate students to observe their teaching. We would like to thank Keith Hipel, Systems Design Eng., Rohan Jayasundera, Physics and Astronomy and Gord Stubley, Mechanical and Mechatronics Eng. for taking time out of their busy schedules to assist us this past fall term.

**Previous Teaching Matters Newsletters can be viewed in** [**our newsletter archives**](http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/who_we_are/index.html?tab=6)**.**