

Consulting Works!

University teaching is a strange business. As Chris Knapper and Sergio Piccinin (1999) have noted, most university instructors receive “no advanced training for their major role” related to teaching, and after their appointment often teach “in isolation” (p.3). Most other professions have stringent training programs and accreditation standards for such a major portion of their working lives.

This lack of infrastructure can pose problems either for those who

simply want to be more expert instructors or those who experience difficulty with their teaching.

Fortunately, at least according to available research, consulting seems to assist university instructors in improving their teaching practices at least as measured by student course evaluations. At the University of Ottawa, Sergio Piccinin (1999) conducted a 7-year study of 165 faculty members who accessed the University’s teaching consulting services. Consulting at Ottawa (just as it does at Waterloo) could consist of a single discussion regarding instructional issues, a discussion combined with class observations, or a discussion along with class observations and an analysis of student evaluations. In his study, Piccinin compared course evaluations before and after the consultation(s). He found that course evaluations significantly improved immediately for faculty who sought more than a one-time consultation. But even the faculty who did seek a brief consultation also experienced better course evaluations after a semester or so.

The research also concurs that some specific characteristics are associated with effective consulting. It is important, for instance, that instructors be active participants in the process and that any critiques be offered in a supportive way. In fact, it is just as important to point to what is working as it is to point to areas that need improve-

ment. Consulting also works much better if instructors voluntarily seek to improve their instructional practices. Maintaining professional confidentiality regarding consulting is also essential to ensure that faculty feel comfortable seeking assistance.

At TRACE, we offer a full range of consulting opportunities from classroom observations to analyses of course designs and course evaluations. So if you want to add even more “zing” to your courses or you have that nagging sense that things just are not working as well as you want them to, contact Donna Ellis at donnae@admmail or extension 35713.

Knapper, C. & Piccinin, S. (1999). Consulting about teaching: An Overview. In *Using Consultants to Improve Teaching*, C. Knapper & S. Piccinin (Eds.). pp.3-8. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.

Piccinin, S. (1999). How individual consultation affects teaching. In *Using Consultants to Improve Teaching*, C. Knapper & S. Piccinin (Eds.). pp.71-83. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.

Catherine Schryer

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Focus on Teaching

Department Chairs are reminded of the opportunity to hold a “Focus on Teaching” Event. Multi-department events are also possible. Contact Donna Ellis for more information at: donnae@admmail.

Making Teaching Public: UW Opens Classrooms



What makes award-winning teachers on our campus stand out as educators? The Open Classroom series – an initiative of UW’s Teaching Excellence Council (TEC) and the Office of the Associate Vice-President, Learning Resources & Innovation (AVP-LRI) – enables you to find out. Ron McCarville, from Recreation & Leisure Studies, welcomed six colleagues to a lecture on customer service in a third-year course this past Fall.

To prepare for the event, Ron provided background information about the open class (context, topic, teaching methods, and goals) and a course outline. Tracy Penny Light collated these materials and sent them out to those who registered to attend the class, along with guidelines for observing a colleague’s teaching.

Ron admitted to being nervous

about having colleagues from across campus attend his class. His normal “audience” of 81 students did not stress him as much as his few colleague observers! Feedback from these observers indicated that they appreciated seeing another instructor’s style and interaction with students. They also commented on Ron’s emphasis of the lecture goals at different points during the 90-minute class, his use of examples to help students understand the theory, and his use of classroom space and equipment.

From Ron’s perspective, the hour-long, post-lecture discussion provided the most benefit. The observers met informally with Ron and discussed teaching and learning issues in general. While they came back to Ron’s class as an example, they spent the majority of the discussion sharing challenges and ways to deal with those challenges. Sample discussion topics included course management issues, preparation, student engagement, and the use of technology. There was an open sharing of resources and stories that was enhanced by the interdisciplinarity of the faculty group.

Ron highlighted a couple of key take-away ideas from the whole event. First, he learned that while not everyone faces the same issues that he does in his classroom, he could learn a lot of different strategies that he could adapt to his situa-

tion. Having an opportunity to share ideas helps an instructor to “get out of the box” and see that numerous strategies are available to deal with our dynamic classrooms.

Second, he felt that opening his classroom helped him to be more reflective as a teacher. He analyzed more deeply what he chose to do in the open class as well as the entire course, and considered carefully what he could offer to his colleagues to assist them with their teaching. From Ron’s perspective, what brings him success in the classroom is not a set of specific teaching methods or classroom management strategies. For him, the key is rapport. The moment by moment interactions that he has with his students help to build a sense of trust and commitment with them that makes them open to learning in that course. In only one class, Ron’s observers could not see the process of rapport-building that happens over a term, but undoubtedly the classroom environment that they witnessed that day held evidence of the relationship that Ron had built with his students.

The TEC and AVP-LRI Office thanks Ron, as well as Doris Jakobsh and Bob Sproule, for opening their classrooms this past Fall. This term, Adel Sedra and Brian Dixon will be opening their classrooms. Watch for notices by email in order to register for these events.

Donna Ellis

Learning about Teaching: Celebrating 50 Years of Teaching Excellence at UW

The Teaching Excellence Council (TEC) is pleased to announce “Learning about Teaching” events starting the end of this term. As the Teaching Excellence Academy is wrapping up, the whole campus is invited to the Presidents’ Collo-

quium on Teaching and Learning.

On April 30, Dr. Ken Bain, author of *What the Best College Teachers Do* and a faculty member at Montclair State University, will speak on “What Makes Great Teachers Great?”. He will also pro-

vide two workshops on May 1 on teaching large classes and syllabus development. Other activities such as theme-based discussion groups will round out the events.

Mark your calendars and watch for more details about these events!

CUT News

Transition to the Revised CUT

As you know, in September we launched a revised version of the Certificate in University Teaching (CUT) in order to improve the program model and to provide more assistance to current and future CUT participants. During the Fall term, we were working through the details of the new program. This was a learning experience for us, and we want to thank CUT participants for their understanding and useful feedback as we worked through the transitional term. Now with a clearer understanding of the logistical details of the new program, we are looking forward to an even smoother term in winter.

Research Project Workshops a Success

In the Fall term, TRACE partnered with two Liaison Librarians, Laura Briggs and Christy Branson, to offer a new research workshop for participants who are beginning to work on their research projects for GS 902. The workshop, "Finding Education Literature," introduces CUT participants to ERIC - the world's largest digital library of

educational literature. Based on the feedback that we received from CUT participants, the workshop has provided them with much-needed guidance in finding higher education literature for their research projects. This workshop, which is required for new CUT participants registered in GS 902, will be offered again in the Winter term. We hope to see you there!

New Option for Presenting the CUT Research Project

In the Winter term, CUT participants working on their research projects on a teaching-related issue can present their work in a poster session at the UW's annual Graduate Student Research Conference (GSRC) at the end of April. Conference abstracts are due February 2, 2007, and supporting documentation for the CUT program needs to be submitted by March 26, 2007, before the conference. Presenting a poster for the CUT does not prevent students from presenting their own research during the conference. If you are interested in presenting your CUT research paper at the conference, contact Svitlana at staraban@admmail.uwaterloo.ca.

For more information about doing a research poster presentation at the GSRC 2007, go to:

<http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/CUT902rpe.html>

For more information about this year's GSRC conference, go to:

<http://www.grad.uwaterloo.ca/Conference2007/>

Svitlana Taraban-Gordon

Tips on How to Write a Successful Response Paper

Recognizing that the experience of writing an application-based reflection paper on a teaching-related workshop is a new experience for CUT participants, we created a one-page document, "How to Write a Successful CUT Response Paper."

We encourage you to read it online at: <http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/SuccessfulCUTPaper.pdf>
Good luck and happy writing!

Teaching Awards

Awards for Exceptional Teaching by a Student are open to all registered students who have a formal teaching role (e.g., teaching assistant, lab demonstrator, sessional lecturer) at the University or its federated and affiliated University Colleges. Criteria can be found at: <http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/taaward.html>. To nominate a student, submit a completed nomination form (<http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/ETSAform.doc>) or a letter that clearly explains why the nominee should receive the award. Letters count as multiple endorsements if signed by multiple individuals. Submit nomination forms by email to etsa@lists.uwaterloo.ca.

Distinguished Teacher Awards (DTA) are given in recognition of a continued record of excellence in teaching at the University of Waterloo. All UW instructors are eligible. Criteria can be found at: <http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/dtahrp.html>. Each Faculty and College has a designated DTA liaison to answer questions with respect to the process, as well as to help gather together nomination letters. Please visit <http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/DTALiaisons.html> if you would like help with the nomination of a candidate.

Information about both awards is also available by calling Verna Keller at extension 33857.

University of Waterloo's Teaching Based Research Group

“Teaching is no longer seen as a merely technical or routine activity, but is positioned as a highly complex activity involving deep knowledge and understanding of the subject on the part of the teacher.”

Dr. Ernest Boyer, late President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of University Teaching.

“The main hope for realizing a genuinely student-centred undergraduate education lies in re-engineering the teaching research nexus.”

Dr. Paul Ramsden, Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy, U.K.

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In a recent Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) meeting held at Ryerson University, Toronto, attended by delegates from across Canada, the work of the Teaching Based Research Group (TBRG) at the University of Waterloo was praised as a successful model for engaging faculty in conducting research into undergraduate student learning. The provision of funds through UW's Learning Initiative Fund, SSHRC, and seed grants, combined with professional support for those doing research on teaching and learning in traditional and online classrooms, demonstrates our commitment towards establishing research on teaching and learning in higher education as a legitimate component of the research mission of the university.

Comprising a multi-disciplinary community of researchers from many Faculties, the TBRG initiative contributes to the advancement of knowledge in teaching practice and its impact on student learning processes and outcomes. All members come with an interest in further developing their teaching expertise through research practices embedded in the disciplines, and enhanced by advances in the theories and methods of the learning sciences.

The methods for systematic inquiry used by faculty include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-mode experimental designs. The objective is to generate viable and replicable designs that will readily adapt to ongoing teaching and learning activities in busy classrooms, and that allow for completion of studies within one to three terms. In this way, faculty and students continue to develop, evaluate and share advances in learning within their disciplines, across the campus, and beyond.

For example, Rob Burns from Kinesiology is working on a qualitative project investigating ways to use UW-ACE to teach athletic taping and wrapping; Carol Hulls from Electrical and Computer Engineering is completing a quantitative project exploring the impact of online tutorials; and Sally Gunz and Darren Charters from the School of Accountancy are conducting a mixed methods investigation into

case studies as a way to promote deep learning. See [http://www.learning.uwaterloo.ca/research/faculty\\_index.html](http://www.learning.uwaterloo.ca/research/faculty_index.html) for information about other TBRG projects.

Based on our record of research accomplishments at the UW, we were recently selected to become an Institutional Leader in the scholarship of teaching and learning by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the Higher Education Division, located at Stanford University. This is a three year partnership between Carnegie and selected higher education institutions having a strong commitment to the careful examination of teaching and learning. We are partnered with nine other institutions from Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom that share a thematic focus on research at the undergraduate level. The outcomes of this partnership will enhance our ability and that of our collaborators to examine and expand teaching and research activities in our respective institutions. Our mutual efforts are expected to make significant contributions to research on teaching and learning in higher education.

If you'd like to get involved or for more information, contact: Dr. Vivian Schoner, Director for the Teaching Based Research Group, extension 32940 or [vschoner@admmail.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:vschoner@admmail.uwaterloo.ca).

Visit the TBRG website at <http://www.learning.uwaterloo.ca/research>.

*Vivian Schoner*

### LT3 Winter 2007 Event

(Centre for Learning and Teaching Through Technology)

***Stay or Switch? A Learning Object to Promote Understanding of the Monty Hall Dilemma***

Presented by Dr. David DiBattista, Psychology Professor, Associate Dean of Social Sciences, and Chancellor's Chair of Teaching Excellence, Brock University.

**Thursday, January 11, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm, FLEX Lab, LIB 329**

For more information on other LT3 Events, or to register, please go to: <http://LT3.uwaterloo.ca/events>.

## New CUT Program Coordinator



This October, TRACE welcomed its first full-time CUT Program Coordinator. Svitlana Taraban-Gordon, who arrived at TRACE from the Faculty of Education at York University, has completed her orientation at TRACE and is now managing all aspects of the CUT Program. In December, Svitlana defended her dissertation and will receive a PhD in Language, Culture and Teaching from York

University's Faculty of Education. With a Master's degree in Educational Administration (State University of New York at Buffalo, USA) and a Master's degree in Russian Language (Zaporozhye University, Ukraine), Svitlana has extensive knowledge of educational issues not only in Canada but also internationally. For the past five years, Svitlana has been a TA and later a Course Director at York University's Teacher Preparation Program (B.Ed.). Her areas of expertise include issues of language, culture, identity, and globalization. She published her scholarly work in *Education Policy Analysis Archives* and *Canadian Woman Studies*.

Having a strong interest in teaching and learning in international contexts, Svitlana has been involved in teaching and research activities in Macedonia, Germany, Denmark and Finland. In her role as a Research Assistant at York's

Faculty of Education, Svitlana has supported efforts to develop a faculty-wide framework for internationalization. In addition to her research and teaching work, she managed an international project on youth, community development, and new technologies through her work as a Program Coordinator with a Toronto-based non-profit organization TakingITGlobal.

Svitlana is looking forward to focusing her energies and expertise in the area of professional development for graduate students. In addition to coordinating all current activities related to the CUT Program, Svitlana will work on creating resources and developing linkages with graduate students and faculty interested in issues of internationalization, culture, and diversity. Svitlana can be reached at [staraban@admmail.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:staraban@admmail.uwaterloo.ca).

Welcome Svitlana!

## TA Developer News

At the end of December, we said goodbye to two TA Developers – Julie Gauley and Dan Olsen. Both Julie and Dan are leaving TRACE but are not leaving teaching: next term they will be focusing on teaching courses in their respective fields. As TA Developers, Julie and Dan have done an excellent job of providing feedback on teaching

to CUT participants and facilitating TRACE workshops. We wish them all the best in their teaching pursuits!

We are glad that two of our current TA Developers – Trish Stadnyk and Amanda Clark – will continue their work at TRACE during the Winter term. Trish, a PhD candidate in Civil Engineering, was the

part-time CUT Coordinator much of last year. She played an important role in conceptualizing and implementing the changes to the CUT. This year, Trish will continue to work with TRACE as a TA Developer. Amanda Clark, a PhD candidate in Psychology, will also continue to work with us as a TA Developer for one more term.

### Instructional Development Grants Available

Instructional Development (ID) Grants of up to \$1,000 are administered through the TRACE Office. ID Grants are designed to help instructors improve teaching effectiveness. The next deadline for proposals is **Friday, May 25, 2007**. Information and the application form can be obtained from the TRACE website at:

<http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/idhp.html>

### Congratulations to Recent CUT Graduates!

During the fall term, six CUT participants completed the program. They are: Koreen Clements, Donna Kerfoot, Wesley Eby, Rebecca North, Barbara-Anne Robertson and Jenny Shuta. We wish them success in their teaching journey!

## Winter 2007 TRACE Events

|          |         |                                                                            |
|----------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January  | 23 (T)  | <b>Assessing Your Teaching</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.                  |
|          | 24 (W)  | <b>Assessing Your Teaching</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.                  |
|          | 25 (Th) | <b>Teaching Dossiers Workshop*</b><br>Time: 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.              |
|          | 29 (M)  | <b>Research Projects Workshop*</b><br>Time: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.               |
|          | 31 (W)  | <b>Understanding the Learner*</b><br>Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.          |
| February | 7 (W)   | <b>Consultation Session: Teaching Dossiers*</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. |
|          | 8 (Th)  | <b>Course Design*</b><br>Time: 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.                           |
|          | 12 (M)  | <b>Consultation Session: Research Projects*</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. |
|          | 26 (M)  | <b>CVs &amp; Cover Letters</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.                  |
| March    | 6 (T)   | <b>Research Projects Workshop*</b><br>Time: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.               |
|          | 7 (W)   | <b>Interactive Teaching Activities</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.          |
|          | 8 (Th)  | <b>Interactive Teaching Activities</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.          |
|          | 14 (W)  | <b>Teaching Dossiers Workshop*</b><br>Time: 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.              |
|          | 15 (Th) | <b>CVs &amp; Cover Letters</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.                  |
|          | 20 (T)  | <b>Consultation Session: Research Projects*</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. |
|          | 30 (F)  | <b>Consultation Session: Teaching Dossiers*</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. |
| April    | 9 (M)   | <b>Course Design*</b><br>Time: 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.                           |
|          | 16 (M)  | <b>Consultation Session: Research Projects*</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. |
|          | 19 (Th) | <b>Understanding the Learner*</b><br>Time: 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.               |
|          | 23 (M)  | <b>Consultation Session: Teaching Dossiers*</b><br>Time: 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. |

TRACE Workshops are open to all instructors at UW. Those listed with an asterisk (\*) are required for the Certificate in University Teaching (CUT), but space for non-CUT instructors may be available.

CUT participants, please note that all of these workshops partially fulfill CUT requirements for GS 901 and 902. **Required CUT workshops will be offered each term.** Check the CUT website for details about which workshops you require.

For details and workshop registration go to:  
<http://www.trace.uwaterloo.ca/workhp.html>

## Faculty-Only Events

The Teaching Excellence Academy will be held again this term! From April 25 to 30 at St. Paul's College, TRACE and faculty co-facilitators will help participants work through a process to re-design one of their courses. This retreat is for faculty members from all across campus.

New faculty members will be invited to a Lunch and Learn session on "Documenting Teaching for Tenure and Promotion" in March. Watch for more details on these events!

## TRACE Teaching Matters

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*Teaching Matters* is published by the Teaching Resources (TRACE) Office. At TRACE, we support yet challenge instructors in developing and reflecting on their teaching practices, goals, and beliefs.

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