

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: SUPPORTING UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AT WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Collaborative Inquiry Fellowships highlight best writing instruction practices

By Carmen Werder, Writing Instruction Support Director

Eight Western faculty members and their student partners are studying various writing instruction practices. They are working together to explore the effectiveness of these practices and will be going public with their findings.

Teams are expected to share their results by submitting research reports to the Writing Instruction Support website as well as presenting them in discipline-based venues by the end of the 2008 calendar year. Some fellows intend to submit to disciplinary journals and also present at professional conferences, including the *Festival of Scholarship: Celebrating Collaborative Inquiry* event to be held at WWU in April 2008. There are eight co-inquiry teams:

Jennifer Karchmer and student to be named (Communication), *Assessing Journal Writing*

Lauren McClanahan and Molly Mullen (Secondary Ed), *Cross-cultural Writing Collaboration*



“Creating a Culture of Writing” is theme for ‘08 Innovative Teaching Showcase

Three WWU faculty who embed the writing process into their coursework and engage students with quality writing assignments are also being featured in this year’s multimedia Showcase, to be published online by the Center for Instructional Innovation in June 2008. Shown left to right are Kathleen Saunders (Anthropology); Bob Mitchell (Geology); and Julia Sapin, (Art History). For more information go to: <http://pandora.cii.wvu.edu/cii/showcase/>.

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Accreditation ‘08 UPDATE

NWCCU accreditation site visit set for April 7 - 9

An evaluation team assembled by the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) will visit Western’s campus for three days this spring, to assess the University’s performance relative to NWCCU accreditation standards. This visit—set for April 7-9—is the final phase of the NWCCU self-study process that has been ongoing at Western since 2005.

A comprehensive self-study report has been prepared and will be sent to evaluators in February. This report will also be available online to the general public by February 15, and can be accessed from the President’s and Provost’s websites.

While the evaluators are on campus, they will be studying extensive exhibits that have been prepared according to NWCCU

guidelines, and they will also be interviewing members of the campus community. The interviews will be brief and are intended to provide the committee with an up-to-date perspective on Western’s strengths and challenges.

The Provost’s office will be holding a session in mid-February for College Deans, department chairs, program directors, and Vice-Provosts to prepare them for this visit. Any interested parties may also contact Kris Bulcroft (kris.bulcroft@wwu.edu or x/3004) in the Provost’s office for more information.

E V E N T S

International Opportunities Fair, Thurs., Jan. 24, 10 AM—2 PM, VU Multi-purpose Room

Students (and faculty) who want to know more about the myriad opportunities to study, work, or intern abroad—or get more involved in global events here at home—should attend. Representatives of over 50 organizations will be on hand to share information on all the exciting international opportunities that await. For more information: email Susan.Anderson@wwu.edu or call x/3240.

Winter Career Fair, Thurs., Feb. 14, 10 AM—3 PM, VU Multi-purpose Room

This is one of WWU’s major recruitment events, and provides students with an excellent opportunity to meet with hiring managers from a broad range of non-profit organizations, government agencies and private companies. For more information go to the Career Services Center in Old Main 280, call x/3240, email careers@wwu.edu or go to the web: <http://www.careers.wvu.edu>

>> Johann Neem explores the civic mission of higher education, INSIDE

Christine Compston heads new WWU Fellowships office

—Goals include identifying and preparing students early in their academic careers for nationally competitive fellowships, and helping them with the application process.

Western—in keeping with universities across the nation—has founded a centralized fellowships office to assist students who are applying for nationally competitive fellowships.

Dr. Christine Compston has been hired to oversee the office, which is under the purview of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. The office serves as a clearinghouse for information on a wide range of fellowships available to sophomores and juniors as well as graduating seniors and alumni. In addition to helping students identify scholarships that match their backgrounds and career goals, Compston also assists students in the application process.

In the past, Compston explained, Western

faculty and administrators have served as campus representatives for specific fellowships and scholarships, and that will continue to be the case for a few, where a system is in place and working well. A real advantage of having a central office, she added, is that students can easily explore a range of opportunities and, in the process, find the right fit.

Compston pointed out those Western students simply would not be able to participate in some of the competitions for national fellowships without a person on campus designated to serve as liaison.

“Foundations that fund these high-end scholarships assume that a campus representative is available to work with students. They ask them to distribute guidelines to faculty who are writing recommendations. In addition, they often assign them responsibility for making sure that applications are completed and sent when and in the manner required,” she said.

One goal is to reach students who meet the criteria for fellowships and encourage them to think about applying. Another goal is to connect with students early in their academic careers and help them prepare themselves to be strong candidates. To this end, Compston is meeting with faculty and deans and working with George Mariz in the Honors program.

Although winning a major scholarship is the objective, Compston explains that “one of the most important outcomes of the mentoring process is that students—even those who are not successful—learn a great deal about themselves and begin to think seriously about their



Christine Compston (photo by Andriy Semenyuk)

goals and how to achieve them.”

Compston encourages faculty and students to contact her for at the new Fellowships Office, College Hall 237, or call x/4241 or email: Christine.Compston@wwu.edu

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Catherine McDonald and Amanda Hill (English), *Effect of Self-sponsored Digital Writing*

Bob Mitchell and Niki Thane (Geology), *Integration of Technical and Scientific Writing*

Julia Sapin and Robyn Rossmeisl (Art History), *Use of Blogging*

Shelby Sheppard and Jennifer Larson (Secondary Ed), *Using a Field Journal to Enhance Conceptual Understanding* and Sheppard is also working with **Gretchen Robertson** on *Linking Research Design to Conceptual Understanding*.

Jim Stewart and Mike Greiner (Physics), *Use of Electronic Exploratory Writing (via the Student Workbook program) in enhancing writing proficiency*

Tara Perry and Brian Launius, Hayley Peterson & Leslie Stose (Communication), *Co-authoring: Faculty and Students Engage in a Research Project*

For more information about these collaborative research projects, contact Carmen Werder, Writing Instruction Support director, carmen.werder@wwu.edu

TEACHING & LEARNING NEWS BRIEFS

Boost student engagement with clickers

Would you like to energize your large lecture course in a very simple and effective way? Try clickers. *Using Clickers in the College Classroom*, a short instructional video clip you can access from your computer, is now available on the Center for Instructional Innovation's website. Clickers can foster discussion, make teaching more dynamic, and promote engagement. To access this and other modules go to: <http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/cii/resources/modules/>

Yes, there IS a faculty dining area...

Viking Union Room 464, reserved as a dining area just for faculty and staff, is open from 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM, Monday through Friday, when class is in session VU 464 has a comfortable atmosphere and is appointed with table linens, ice water and napkins. Diners can bring a sack lunch or get food to go at the Viking Union Market & Cafe on the sixth floor, the Underground Coffeehouse on the third floor, or on Vendors Row.

Use the newspaper in your class

Those faculty who require *The New York Times* in one or more classes are entitled to a free subscription. For more information (or to obtain order forms for your students), stop by the customer service desk at the Associated Students Bookstore. There is still time: subscriptions start the second week of the quarter.

American Democracy Project (ADP) at WWU: Restoring the Civic Mission of Higher Education

Johann N. Neem, Assistant Professor, History (and member of Western's ADP Steering Committee)



One of the primary purposes of higher education in the United States is to prepare future citizens and civic leaders. Western graduates, regardless of their career choice, can expect to become leaders in their communities and, as they progress in their careers, to be responsible for large and influential organizations. Western has among the best student bodies in the state, and it behooves us to ensure that our graduates have the moral and intellectual preparation to they need to be useful members of the various communities in which

they will participate.

The United States' Founding Fathers were well aware that democracies, more than any other kind of government, require well-educated citizens and leaders. Only in a democracy are all citizens governors. All citizens must therefore have the knowledge and skills necessary to vote, follow the news, and make thoughtful judgments. Otherwise, the Founders worried, elected leaders would find it too easy to manipulate the electorate.

Elected leaders must also be educated. They should have the thoughtfulness and character of one entrusted with the people's power. They must be prepared to deal with complex problems, be able to draw from the past, but also to imagine a

new future.

In essence, all citizens need a liberal education, an education preparing them to be members of a free society. Liberal, after all, derives from the same root as the word liberty.

John Adams was confident "that whenever a general knowledge and Sensibility have prevailed among the People, Arbitrary Government and every kind of oppression have lessened and disappeared in Proportion." Believing that the people were the "only safe depository" for power in a democracy, Thomas Jefferson urged his home state Virginia to support public education for young children. The best students would continue on to the University of Virginia, a public institution that Jefferson founded.

There, they would receive a more advanced liberal education to prepare them to for leadership.

American colleges and universities have not

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ADP HAS A BLOG

In order to better promote civic events and conversations on campus, ADP at WWU now has its own blog: westernadp.net. The blog contains postings on current topics, links to campus events and ADP partners, and news feeds. To suggest changes, postings or links, contact Ann Carlson, x/2345 or ann.carlson@wwu.edu

ADP INTERNATIONAL

Students and faculty wanted for WWU-Ukraine civic exchange for fall 2008

Western's new exchange program with Ivan Franko National University in L'viv, Ukraine, is still in its infancy. To date, four Ukrainian students have attended WWU, and two WWU students studied at Ivan Franko this past fall. Faculty and students who are interested in learning more or participating, are encouraged to contact Richard Bruce in International Programs & Exchanges, Richard.Bruce@wwu.edu or x/6517, or Ann Carlson, x/2345, ann.carlson@wwu.edu

Stephen Prothero - World Religions Expert President's Distinguished Lecture Series Tuesday, Feb. 12, PAC Mainstage, 6:30 PM (Tickets free but required)

According to Stephen Prothero, the United States is one of the most religious nations, and yet



it knows very little about religions, whether their own or those of others. In his best-selling and acclaimed book, *Religious Literacy*, Prothero asserts that this religious illiteracy is one of our most pressing civic problems. Prothero's argument for why religion must become the "Fourth R" of American education—and that schools teach mandatory academic study of religions—has sparked a debate about the powerful and often uncontested role religion plays in our lives.

The Washington Post recently named *Religious Literacy* one of the best books of 2007; it has won awards and is an "editor's choice" of *The New York Times*. Prothero is Chair of the Department of Religion at Boston University and earned his PhD in Religion from Harvard, and is a specialist in Asian religious traditions in the U.S. He is a frequent guest on NPR, and has appeared on *The Today Show*, *The Daily Show* and *The O'Reilly Factor*. He has also written for *Salon.com* and *The New York Times Magazine*. Tickets are available in January. To get them, go to: <http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~lectures/speakers.html>

PRAXIS is published quarterly throughout the academic year by the Office of the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education. Created as a forum for faculty and student support professionals on Western's campus, PRAXIS promotes the exchange of ideas and provides information on upcoming events and topical issues in teaching and learning at the undergraduate level.

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Teaching-Learning Academy Fall 2007 Update: Dialogue on Dialogue

By Jesse Nelson, TLA Student Staff and Carmen Werder, TLA Director

The Teaching-Learning Academy (TLA), Western's ongoing dialogue forum to strengthen the learning culture, is home to engaging conversation and exciting ideas. About 85 participants (including faculty, staff, and students) met biweekly during fall quarter to initiate a study of this year's over-arching question: *What keeps us from genuine dialogue across multiple perspectives? And what would encourage that dialogue in sustaining a respectful, learning culture?* TLA members identified one of three thematic strands related to the big question and chose one which most interested them.

Identity and Influence—individual or collective self-understanding.

Co-Mentoring and Co-Inquiry—a collective seeking for new knowledge/information.

Innovations in Assessing Teaching & Learning—options for evaluating teaching and learning.

The discussions prompted a number of shared observations and related suggestions. Over the course of the quarter, the strand groups worked first to define their chosen sub-theme before moving into a discussion of how best to apply their findings to Western's learning environment. The dialogue continues this quarter: Please join us!

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entirely abandoned the rhetoric of citizenship, but they have certainly not made it the priority Adams and Jefferson did. Why have we lost sight of this fundamental goal? Among many reasons two stand out: the emergence of the academic disciplines and the development of a purely economic conception of education.

The formation of the modern academic disciplines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries transformed what it means to be a professor. Whereas most American professors were generalists first and specialists second, the division of the curriculum into disciplines, and the subsequent division of the college into academic departments, alienated faculty from each other. Liberal education emphasizes the interrelatedness of the various arts and sciences but the modern university divides them up into discrete units. Despite general education requirements, students, much less the public, cannot be expected to value liberal education when faculty teach courses that promote specialized knowledge.

As faculty retreated into their disciplines, others stepped in to dominate the conversation about

higher education. Policymakers and increasingly university administrators focus on the narrowly economic functions of higher education. The fastest growing degrees in the United States are those that train students for specific jobs rather than to become broadly-educated civic and business leaders. College degrees are valued solely because they improve individuals' long-term earning capacities and promote economic growth. While a strong economy and upward mobility should both be celebrated, it would be unfortunate if these goals trumped the civic mission of college education. Western's graduates should leave this fine institution—not just as better workers—but as capable citizens ready to take on the responsibilities that come with education.

A return to liberal education, and thus a revitalization of the core civic function of higher education, will require faculty to think more about how we go about fostering our students' hearts and minds *on campus*, in addition to how well each of us perform in our disciplinary endeavors *off campus*. We must articulate about what it means to be a Western graduate, not just what it means to graduate with a particular major. Only then will we challenge the degradation of higher education's noble goals.

To learn more about ADP, go to westernadp.net

JOIN THE TLA FOR WINTER QUARTER

TLA dialogue groups resume their every other week schedule beginning the second week of winter term, Jan. 16/17. Participants can choose from one of four dialogue group days/times: Wed. at Noon, 2 or 4 PM; or Thurs. at Noon. To sign up email Megan, megan.otis@wwu.edu

TLA on the web: <http://www.wwu.edu/depts/tla/>