

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

Report from AAC&U Conference

## Commitment to gen ed is strong nationally

Kris Bulcroft

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) recently sponsored a conference, *General Education—Goals, Strategies, and Assessments for Powerful Learning*.

Held in Philadelphia February 27-March 1, the conference theme of general education proved a lucrative topic: More than 190 institutions of higher education were in attendance, for a total of 510 individual participants. Sessions were divided in two tracts—one geared to those institutions that are at the beginning or intermediate levels of implementing general education innovations, and one for those that are working to sustain their innovations. (I presented a session on incorporating the student voice in the gen ed change process.)

What appears to be the trend in gen ed nationwide? Many colleges and universities are moving from distributive models of general education (i.e., speci-

fied numbers of credits and courses in sciences, humanities/arts, and social sciences) to more integrated types of curricula.

Emphasis remains strong, however, on keeping the liberal arts as the foundation in these general education integrated models. More so than in the past few years, too, more institutions are moving past implementation issues into assessment of student learning in general education. These efforts are well underway at institutions including James Madison, University of Arizona, Duke University, and a host of others.

All of these changes in gen ed are, of course, happening in a time of fewer resources, economic uncertainty, and greater access demands in higher education. It was encouraging to see that, despite the obstacles, many institutions have sustained or renewed their strong commitment to general education.

## Gen Ed Task Force finalizes curriculum recommendations

—Final Task Force report on a gen ed program proposal to go to ACC on April 15



Susan Mancuso

General Education Task Force Chair

With great excitement, the General Education Task Force has completed its work on the general education curriculum proposal. On April 15 the recommendations will be unveiled at ACC, the body which created the original Task Force charge.

The curriculum builds upon the strengths of the liberal arts tradition valued at this university. The Task Force appreciates the extensive campus discussions and feedback received over the past four months in response to the initial draft general education proposals communicated in October. Members of the Task

Force formally participated in 24 department, staff, and student meetings to discuss the proposals and hear feedback from several hundred people. Additionally, there have been a variety of forums, study groups and web discussions, resulting in individual, group, and department ideas and written proposals. A scribe kept notes at every meeting then analyzed the notes, as well as additional campus proposals, for campus themes. Given the clear commitment of having the final general education curriculum proposal represent not the voice of the Task Force members but the themes from faculty discussions across campus, we anticipate that the campus will see the curriculum as a reflection of faculty beliefs about a strong WWU general education program.

For more info: <http://pandora.cii.wvu.edu/gened/>

## EVENTS

### APRIL

**Center for Service Learning Presents** —Attend this session to gain an understanding of ways community-based learning—and connecting students to meaningful outside-of-class experiences—might fit your student learning objectives. *Wed, April 2, at 4-5 PM, HH 345.*

### MAY

**Creating Optimal Learning Environments (CREOLE)** — Join the Center for Instructional Innovation to learn how to access and use the CREOLE web-based modules to enhance online teaching and learning strategies. CREOLE modules have been developed by nationally recognized faculty from throughout the U.S. *Wed., May 7, at 4-5 PM, HH 345.*

### JUNE

**Innovative Teaching Showcase Open House**— Meet the Center for Instructional Innovation staff and the featured instructors in this year's Innovative Teaching Showcase. *Wed., June 4, at 4-5 PM, at the CII, Miller Hall 156.*

*Professional development events are free for faculty and staff and no registration is required. For more information, go to: <http://pandora.cii.wvu.edu/cii>*

# Community-based learning highlighted this spring



Angie Harwood (Secondary Education), above left, and Tara Perry (Communication), right, are two of four faculty members selected for the 2003 CII Innovative Teaching Showcase. Other showcasees are Deborah Greer, Theatre Arts, and Carol Janson, Art.

Justina Brown  
Center for Instructional Innovation

With this year's theme, "From Classroom to Community," the CII's *Innovative Teaching Showcase* is highlighting four instructors who embrace community-based learning strategies in their courses.

The CII received nominations and collaborated with the Center for Service Learning to select this year's outstanding

Showcase faculty, who are:

Deborah Greer, Theatre Arts; Angie Harwood, Secondary Education and WWU Service Learning Faculty Fellow; Carol Janson, Art; and Tara Perry, Communication.

Tune in to the CII's Innovative Teaching Showcase website this June to see how these four WWU instructors connect the theories and con-

tent of their courses to their students' real-world learning experiences with community clients. Or, check out the Showcase anytime for great ideas on a variety of instructional approaches including collaboration, active learning, critical thinking activities, project-based learning, immersive technologies, and curricular transformation.

Visit the *Innovative Teaching Showcase* <http://pandora.cii.wvu.edu/cii/showcase/>

Community-based workshop is April 5

Angie Harwood and Lisa Moulds, director of the Service Learning Center, will facilitate a panel on community-based learning on Wed., April 5, at 4 - 5 PM, Haggard Hall 345. The session includes discussion of community-based learning as an effective pedagogy, how to revise or create a course to include community-based learning, and other available resources. All faculty and staff are welcome. For more information email: Lisa Moulds, [Lisa.Moulds@wwu.edu](mailto:Lisa.Moulds@wwu.edu)

## Assessment Update

# Western develops tailor-made student survey

Gary McKinney  
Office of Institutional Assessment & Testing

Western is embarking on using a unique student survey, one developed here and tailored specifically to the needs of the university.

The Western Education Longitudinal Study (WELS) is being designed to more efficiently serve the data needs of the Western community by streamlining current survey methodology. For most of this past year, WELS developers at Western have been gathering feedback from offices and departments who use survey data to help guide their program development. From this input a Western-specific survey instrument is being designed (and is roughly three-quarters completed).

The WELS will rely on using online and telephone survey technologies. Researchers have a target of getting a student response rate of at

least 90 percent. The large participation rate is crucial to the WELS design. For one thing, the WELS approach is based on a six-year survey cycle, *with a new cycle beginning every three years*. For another, it will replace some surveys that are given every year.

The initial survey of in-coming freshmen will be administered this summer, 2003; the next survey of in-coming freshmen will take place in the summer, 2006. Each survey cycle will run for six years.

To illustrate how WELS will work, let's consider the first survey cycle. In the summer, 2003, the freshmen "baseline" will be established. In the spring, 2004, a follow-up survey of fall freshmen will be administered to a cohort of that baseline. In the spring, 2005, a survey of

second-year students (again a cohort sample taken from the baseline) will be administered. Subsequent surveys will be conducted at the end of the third and fourth year, supplemented past graduation by alumni surveys. And this is only the fundamental design—if appropriate and desirable, other surveys not yet thought of could be administered, as well.

With a large pool of "baseline" survey participants, representative random samples of students (as few as 200) can be contacted for future surveys. This means a wider variety of surveys could be included in each cycle that would yield more detailed, specific, and useful findings.

For further information about the WELS, contact Gary McKinney. Phone: x/3409; Email: [Gary.McKinney@wwu.edu](mailto:Gary.McKinney@wwu.edu); Campus mail— Mail Stop 9010.

# Western goes to Washington, D.C.

Western participated recently at The American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) annual meeting in Washington, D.C. This year's conference focus was *Learning to Change*, and was aimed at bringing new energy to the challenges facing institutions of higher education today.

As part of the conference's plenary session, Western presented a paper in conjunction with Elon University: *Dialogue—Partnership—Scholarship: Understanding the Relationship between the Student Voice and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. Western and Elon were featured at the plenary because of their joint efforts in incorporating the undergraduate voice in teaching and learning. (Both were identified by the AAHE last year as National Leadership Sites for their work involving undergraduates in institutional change.)

WWU session presenters are Joseph Garcia (Management); Kris Bulcroft (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education); Emily Roeder (sophomore majoring in Chemistry); and Teresa Todd (senior majoring in Psychology). Elon University presenters are Glenda Crawford (Education), Stacey Gillespie (Chemistry), and Kim Bolton (undergraduate). The audience at the conference included institutions of higher education that have participated in the AAHE/Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

## Be Tomorrow's Professor, Today

It's billed as "desk-top faculty development," and is sent twice a week to more than 15,000 subscribers in more than 500 institutions in 110 countries. It's the "Tomorrow's Professor" list serv, sponsored by Stanford University's Center for Teaching and Learning, and is the brainchild of Richard Reis, a consulting professor in the electrical and mechanical engineering departments at Stanford. Reis started the list serv in 1998 and it's grown to embrace a wide range of higher education issues and articles.

To learn more, go to the Tomorrow's Professor website: <http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tompof/index.shtml> Or, to sign up for the list serv, send the message [subscribe tomorrows-professor] to: [Majordomo@lists.stanford.edu](mailto:Majordomo@lists.stanford.edu)

—Source: *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 30, 2002

# A Radical Idea

—Or, how a civil rights leader inspired an interdisciplinary approach to math and history.

Karen Casto  
Center for Instructional  
Innovation

When Robert Moses was a young man in the early Sixties, he traveled from his home in the North to participate in the voter registration drives in Mississippi. As an original member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the principal architect of the "freedom summer" of

1964, Moses had an historical impact on the civil rights movement. Twenty years after the events in Mississippi, however, Moses started his Algebra Project in order to help African-Americans and other minorities to advance in another arena with great political implications: education.

As Moses explains it, "the lesson I draw from history ... is that the idea of citizenship now requires not only literacy in reading and writing but literacy in math and science. And the way we guarantee this necessary literacy is through education conceived of much more broadly than what goes on in classrooms."

The work of Dr. Moses, and his book, *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project* (2001), were the inspiration for a First-year Interest Group (FIG) cluster, taught this past winter quarter. The course cluster, titled *Radical Equations* after Moses' book, paired Marc Richards' American history course (History 104) with Edna Arthurs' Math 102 course; the two are also connected with a small seminar class. In addition to helping students be successful in their math and history courses, the seminar included readings from Moses' book and discussions of events in American History in which mathematics played a pivotal role.



Left to right: Kayce Nakamura, Nao Matsumoto, Thea Monday, Robert Moses, Jessica Evans, Stephen Bonnell, and FIG seminar instructor Karen Casto, at the Washington Center Conference in February.

Richards, at first anyway, admits he was "very skeptical" whether a FIG pairing of Math 102 and History 104 could ever work.

"There seemed too little common ground for ever using the connection to unravel the mysteries of the learning that happens across academic disciplines," he explained. "It was with blind faith that I entered this quarter."

Richards soon overcame his reticence. "Right from the beginning it all clicked...they hooked me by putting Bob Moses and his book 'Radical Equations' at the heart of the learning discovery process. (He) has long been one of my American heroes."

One very tangible way that the FIG contributed to the History 104 class, Richards said, was in the students' group presentations. All students in the History 104 class (FIG and non-FIG) must work in groups and, "acting as expert historians" must lead one of the class periods on an assigned topic. It was decided that the FIG students would lead the session on the radical phase of the Civil Rights Movement.

"They absolutely aced the presentation,"

continued on pg. 4

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.

Office of the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education  
Western Washington University  
516 High Street Bellingham  
WA 98225-9033

Phone: 360.650.2345  
Email: [praxis@wwu.edu](mailto:praxis@wwu.edu)

PRAXIS online:  
<http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/vpue/praxis>

## More faculty embrace new teaching strategies, technology

*The following are excerpts from the fifth triennial survey conducted since 1989 by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), "The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2001-2002 HERI Faculty Survey" (Jennifer A. Lindholm, Alexander W. Astin, Linda J. Sax and William S. Korn). Questionnaires from 32,840 full-time undergraduate teaching faculty at 358 institutions were used to compute the national norms. The numbers were adjusted statistically to represent the nation's total population of approximately 442,000 college and university faculty.*

◆ Compared with faculty in 1989, today's faculty indicate greater attentiveness to students' overall well-being. Faculty are more likely to view their colleagues as being interested in students' academic problems (83 percent, up from 76 percent) and personal problems (78 percent, up from 74 percent).

◆ More faculty believe (46 percent, up from 34 percent in 1989) that it is easy for students to meet with professors outside of their regular office hours.

◆ Although less than one-third (32 percent) of today's faculty feel that students at their institution are well prepared academically, today's figure is up from 28 percent in 1998 and 24 percent in 1995.

◆ Compared with their counterparts in previous years, the study also finds that faculty today are using a wider variety of teaching methods. For example, 50 percent of faculty place and collect course assignments on the Internet (up from 36 percent in 1998) and 9 percent have taught a course exclusively on the Internet (up from 2 percent in 1998).

◆ Today's faculty are also increasingly more likely to use collaborative instructional methods such as cooperative learning and group projects. In addition, they are incorporating more writing activities across the curriculum.

*The Higher Education Research Institute is housed in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at UCLA. The institute serves as an interdisciplinary center for research, evaluation, information, policy studies and research training in postsecondary education. Copies of the full report are available for \$25 from the Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, 3005 Moore Hall, Box 951521, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521.*

Visit HERI on the web:  
<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html>

## A Radical Idea (con't from pg. 3)

Richards noted, explaining that the students were able to delve more deeply into the topic during their seminar. "They even included a mathematical analysis of increases in historical minority voting rights as part of their attempt to prove whether the Civil Rights Movement had been a success or failure. It was very smart."

In late February, *Radical Equations* students and faculty got a chance to meet Dr. Moses at the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education annual conference, which was held in Seattle. The students also presented a session along with cluster faculty, *Quantitative Literacy in a First-year Program: Applying Radical Equations*, which was focused on how quantitative reasoning can be taught within an interdisciplinary context. Dr. Moses, who delivered the conference keynote address, attended the session and met afterwards with the Western participants.

Meeting Robert Moses, who has not only had a great impact on U.S. history, but who is still striving to help students become "math and science literate" in a real-world context, was powerful for the students. As one FIG student put it, "...the experience of learning about the Civil Rights Movement in both History 104 and in the FIG class, then getting to meet Robert Moses, one of the men who helped lead part of the Civil Rights Movement, was an extraordinary experience."

—*Radical Equations* course website:

[http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/radical\\_equations/](http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/radical_equations/)

—*The Algebra Project* Home Page:

<http://www.algebra.org/index.html>

## Contribute to PRAXIS

We welcome ideas or articles on intriguing pedagogies, teaching strategies, successful classroom practices, assessment of student learning, resources, and other issues of concern to faculty and student affairs professionals. For more information, contact Ann Carlson, Editor, at x/2345, or by email at: [praxis@wwu.edu](mailto:praxis@wwu.edu)