

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

Four faculty named Teaching and Learning Fellows

The four will lead a pilot project to develop systematic assessment of student learning.



Mike Mana

Four Western faculty members will begin work this summer on a pilot project that is aimed at creating and making available systematic assessment of student learning in undergraduate courses.

The four Teaching and Learning Fellows (TLF) are: **Scott Brennan** (Environmental Studies); **Thor Hansen** (Geology); **Kathleen Kennedy** (History); and **Mike Mana** (Psychology). They will be paired with student research partners, and collectively, will create models of assessment practices applicable across academic disciplines and general education offerings.

During the summer, the TLF will conduct a detailed review and possible revision of the syllabi from two of their respective courses, one of which is a GUR. They will identify specific assessment strategies, and look at ways to respond to issues that arise

in the application of assessment tools used for curriculum improvement. Their work will be made available both to colleagues in their respective academic units, and to inform the continuing dialogue on possible changes to general education requirements.

TLF faculty will serve as a campus resource throughout the 2003-04 academic year. Resources and financial support for the TLF and student research partners are being provided by the Office of the Provost and the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing.



Scott Brennan

General education reform: what Western has learned



Kris Bulcroft
Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education

The campus community has been engaged in dialogue and debate about the merits of the proposed general education curriculum. This has been—and will continue to be—a very important conversation for all of us, as it helps clarify the instructional goals and academic mission of Western.

What have we learned in these discussions? We've learned that good general education curricula change. Course offerings evolve, reflecting social, economic, and knowledge-base changes.

—The best general education programs are intentional. They are designed with learning outcomes in mind; they articulate these outcomes, and they provide instructors with resources to accomplish those outcomes.

—Quality of general education programs is more highly correlated with the quality of instruction, feedback and assessment of student learning, and curricular structures that foster student engagement motivation, and reflection, than with the number and
continued on back page

Sign up now for intercession faculty workshops

There are three workshops for faculty being offered during the spring intercession. Sign up for one, or all three. Workshop participants will receive a \$50 stipend for each workshop day as well as a complimentary lunch. Each workshop is limited to 25 participants. To reserve a spot in any workshop, contact Carmen Werder at x/7329, or carmen.werder@wwu.edu

"Creating a Course Portfolio," Thurs., June 19, 9 AM – 4 PM.

This workshop will provide an overview of the portfolio process, and specific strategies for creating a portfolio for a specific course.

"Assessing Student Writing," Fri., June 20, 9 AM – 4 PM.

Participants will share a cross-disciplinary scoring rubric developed in the statewide Senior Writing Study, and learn how to use it within respective domains.

"Instructional Strategies for Teaching Writing," Mon., June 23, 9 AM – 4 PM.

Writing specialists and faculty from across departments will share their best practices for teaching writing.

The workshops are sponsored by the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing, Western's Writing Assessment Group and the Teaching-Learning Academy.

CII Innovative Teaching Showcase 2002-2003

Open house for showcase faculty is June 4

Justina Brown
Center for Instructional Innovation

If you've been curious about the Center for Instructional Innovation's online "Innovative Teaching Showcase," be sure and stop by the Innovative Teaching Showcase Open House, on Wednesday June 4.

The CII is honored to showcase four innovative WWU instructors who incorporate community-based learning into their classes:

Innovative Teaching Showcase
Open House
Wed., June 4
Center for Instructional Innovation
Miller Hall 156
Drop by from 12:30 - 2:30 PM

Innovative Teaching Showcasees (all who use serice-learning in their courses) will be honored on June 4 at an open house at the CII.



learning into their classes:
Deborah Greer,
Angie Harwood,

Carol Janson, and Tara Perry. At the Open House, the new 2002-03 Innovative Teaching Showcase will be unveiled, the multimedia will be projected, refreshments will be served, and the campus community is invited to meet the Showcase professors.

Shown clockwise from upper right are: Carol Janson, Deborah Greer, Tara Perry, and Angie Harwood.



Now in its fourth year, The Innovative Teaching Showcase was created by the CII as a way to highlight and share exceptional teaching practices by WWU faculty. Of course, the Innovative Teaching Showcase can be reviewed online as well. Check it out any time for great ideas on a variety of instructional approaches including collaboration, active learning, critical thinking activities, project-based learning, immersive technologies, and curricular transformation: <http://pandora.cii.wvu.edu/cii/showcase/>

National Spotlight

Western given AAHE Cluster Leader Award for promoting the student voice

The American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) recognized Western recently with a national award, given for our campus's work in promoting the student voice in organizational change.

The Cluster Leader Award was presented to Western at the recent AAHE/Carnegie Colloquium in Washington, D.C., and is meant to acknowledge the extensive work Western has done on student-faculty collaboration in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Campus Program.

The award also designates the university as a national Cluster Leader (one of 12 campuses) for the next phase of the Campus Program.

As part of CASTL's five-year history, faculty have come to recognize that they can pursue

interesting intellectual questions while contributing to student learning and their discipline. The newest phase of the CASTL Campus Program enables campuses to focus collaboratively in clusters on various aspects of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Western was recognized as a leader for our efforts to facilitate ways that students and faculty can partner for institutional change to support teaching and learning. Western's Teaching - Learning Academy (TLA), which grew out of Parts I and II of the CASTL Campus Program, has worked to develop a campus-wide forum where conversations about classroom practice and student learning can lay a foundation for a number of campus initiatives about learning and teaching.

Other campuses have expressed interest in learning how Western has fostered student-faculty collaboration for organizational change, since finding new ways to actualize the democratic principles of shared decision-making is becoming more central to the institutional mission and goals of higher education.

Western has already been contacted by several campuses that are considering becoming cluster members: The University of Maryland-College Park, the University of Missouri-Columbia, Elon University in North Carolina, and Berea College in Kentucky are among those campuses under consideration as core members in our collective efforts to enhance student-faculty collaboration for organizational change.

"MONSTROUS PeDaGOGY"

Ann Carlson, PRAXIS

One constructs his world view through words and rhythm, the other uses facts and physical laws. One relies on what can be hypothesized, tested, and quantified. The other uses poetry as a way to give form to what is shapeless, sensed, and riddled with enigma.

One, you've probably figured out by now, is a scientist, more specifically a paleontologist and geologist. In this case, it's Thor Hansen of the Geology Department. The other, Bruce Beasley of the English Department, is indeed a nationally recognized poet. Finally, despite their disparate disciplines and pedagogical differences, the two have something really big in common: Monsters.

In winter quarter 2004, the two professors will team up to teach an integrated studies course, *The Monstrous Body*. Students will co-enroll in the 3-credit Geology 204, *Geology and Society*, and the 5-credit English 238, *Society Through Its Literature*. The course will examine monsters and monstrous behavior through both scientific and humanistic lenses.

Evolution of a team-taught course

The Monstrous Body evolved slowly. The two professors—long-time friends—had occasionally discussed their mutual interest in monsters. Hansen admits his content for the Geology 204 course (which he will teach for the first time) grew from his "self-interest" in indulging his fascination with Nature's monsters. Beasley has used the subject of what society views as monstrous in his literature courses. His poetry has also been inspired by societal perceptions of the monstrous: One of his works, *Monstrum Fugue*, is about conjoined twins multiple personalities, and the multiplicity of language. Doing an entire course on the monstrous, Beasley said, "really rang my literary bells."

The idea for creating an interdisciplinary course was further seeded last year when Beasley invited Hansen to discuss geology with students in a graduate poetry seminar.



—Two WWU professors overcame disciplinary boundaries to create an 8-credit GUR course that examines monsters and the monstrous from both scientific and humanistic perspectives.

Photo: Thor Hansen, left, and Bruce Beasley, right, display some skeletal monstrosities they may use in their team-taught course, "The Monstrous Body."

"It was a long poem on drug addiction, which used the geology of California as its metaphor," Beasley explained. He thought that helping the students understand the terms of geology would better help them understand the poem.

Hansen led the students in a discussion of the poem, but from a scientific viewpoint. He also used Playdough to help students visualize geological structures, such as tectonic plates and fault lines.

"They were all graduate English students and had had science, but probably forgotten much of it. They were very interested, and we had a good discussion, I like that overlap zone between poetry and science," Hansen said.

A pivotal event that finally spurred the two to actually develop an integrated monsters course was the restructuring of the colleges.

"It turned out to be a big motivation for us when the colleges split," Beasley said, explaining that one of the frequent arguments heard against splitting the College of Arts and Sciences was that it would make it more difficult for departments to do cross-disciplinary courses.

"We realized that wasn't happening now. So we thought maybe we should do one. It's exciting to link humanities with science."

Hansen created the *Geology and Society* course as way to teach the monsters content, but also as a way for the Geology department to have a course that could feature content that evolved as needed. The course was accepted for GUR

credit earlier this year.

Creating Monstrous Pedagogy

Hansen and Beasley created syllabi for their own courses and then collaborated to create junctures and coordination of their respective content. One unit, for example, covers "The Charming Monster." Beasley will approach it through Satan in *Paradise Lost* and Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs*. Hansen will discuss charming monsters in the physical world, such as the praying mantis that disguises itself as a flower. Another unit will talk about gigantism: Beasley will examine the "monstrous as excessive" through monster films, fairy tales, and ancient poems; Hansen will do units on the physics of large size. Both will discuss the origins of mythical monsters such as griffins and dragons. A key to all units, Hansen asserts, is that both he and Beasley will be in the classroom together all the time, "which will allow us to model for the students the interaction between humanistic and scientific perspectives."

Hansen and Beasley are hopeful students will choose to enroll in their combined 8-credit course. Whatever happens, they both feel good they were able to surmount their own disciplinary constraints and bureaucratic hoops to create what they hope will become a model interdisciplinary course.

"You just decide you are going to do it and find a way through the requirements," Hansen added.

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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What Western Has Learned (con't from pg. 1)

type of courses required.

—Attention to the first-year experience enhances overall satisfaction and improves student retention rates. Currently 94% of all colleges and universities in the U.S. offer some form of first-year seminar.

These are among some of the most salient and undisputed findings at a national level. And here at Western, we have learned other important things about our current general education program, things that clarify the need to align ourselves more closely with what the research tells us:

—Data has shown that while our enrollments in lower division courses have increased, our financial support for the 100 and 200 level courses has not. What this has meant is a gradual increase in the class size of lower division courses, greater numbers of adjuncts teaching at the lower division, and course access problems.

—Students typically take 78 credits to complete their general university requirements at WWU. Analysis of course-taking patterns shows that not one student has been able to complete the general education requirements in 67 credits, as hypothesized by some members of the campus community.

—Western has the lowest retention rate among the six public baccalaureate institutions in the state. (The good news is programs such as FIGs hold promise due to their significantly greater retention rates.)

As we've engaged in these dialogues we've found common ground with colleagues in places we've least expected it. There is shared agreement about what we all value about higher education —learning that

brings personal growth and professional development.

What I have personally learned as a result of the many conversations about general education that have taken place in departments, with student groups, and in various committees of shared governance is that

WWU gen ed: Where are we now?

As of press time, the Academic Coordinating Commission (ACC) was continuing to discuss the General Education Task Force's proposed recommendations for revisions in WWU's general education program, which it received on April 15. No adoption of the recommendations —in whole or in part— was pending; nor had any alternatives or implementations procedures been put forth. On May 27, newly-elected ACC members came on board. To learn more about the general education issue and possible actions, contact your ACC representative, or attend a meeting. For more information, go to <http://www.acadweb.wwu.edu/senate/ACC/index.htm>

the vast majority of us take great pride in Western and want to continue to be recognized as a high quality undergraduate institution. I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues (including students) who have taken the time to engage in these very important conversations about ways we might improve our general education offerings.

Based on what we've learned as a campus community, the next step is now before us. We must take our new knowledge and make the necessary modifications to our general education offerings. We are poised to take the next step...praxis, so to speak...from knowing to doing.

Ideas wanted for 2003-04 Faculty Development Series

The Center for Instructional Innovation (CII) is beginning to plan its "First Wednesdays" faculty workshop series for the 2003-04 academic year. The CII invites all faculty members who are interested in professional development to participate in this planning process.

Please give us your ideas for session topics, workshops, and speakers. It's easy: Just go to our web-based survey form at: <http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/ciiforms/workshops.htm>

The form is short and simple to complete. If you have any suggestions for changes in the format of the workshop series, including the day or time, the form has a place for that, as well.

Or, simply e-mail your suggestions to Karen.Casto@wwu.edu *Thank you!*