Spring 1992

The Muse: Resources for Faculty and TA Newsletters, No. 4, Spring 1992

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/podarchives

Part of the Higher Education and Teaching Commons

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/podarchives/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Archives of Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
Sometimes simpler may be better

The case for the traditional one-column newsletter

Linc. Fisch

When most people think of newsletters, they think of publications in two-column or three-column formats. But newsletters started out in one column, and many successful ones today still employ that format -- witness subscription newsletters such as the Kiplinger Washington Letter and even The Newsletter on Newsletters. Why?

There are advantages to the one-column style.

One-column newsletters are easy to produce. You don’t have to take time to make complicated layout decisions. The copy flows, one article or item after the other. All you have to do is determine the linear order.

Because of their linearity, one-column newsletters are more likely to be read straight through by readers. Items aren’t skipped. Ends of articles aren’t lost by jump cuts of several pages.

One-column newsletters resemble business letters and memos. They convey a sense of immediacy, an impression of up-to-the-minute news; they beg to be read. Indeed, with decreased production time, it’s easy to add last-minute items. Thus, this simpler newsletter style is ideal for publications that are issued monthly or weekly, as well as those that are not locked into multiples of four pages -- the common pattern of 11" x 17" sheets, folded once.

And there are also disadvantages.

One-column newsletters with their long lines of text are harder to read. The eye has to make more moves per line, and more effort is required to pick up succeeding lines.

This is probably why multiple-column newsletters in the efficient 8½" x 11" format came into common use. Of course, in small formats, such as most books, this is not a problem.

Readers have become used to the image of multiple-column newsletters. Somehow, the one-column format doesn’t seem quite right to most of them; it doesn’t seem quite as attractive.

One-column newsletters tend to have that "gray" look of solid copy. It’s not as easy to incorporate photos, sketches, and other things to provide visual relief. This becomes a special problem in longer, more formal articles.

See One-column, page 2
But there are ways to make the format work.

The most important technique for successful one-column newsletters is to reduce line-length. Some experts recommend a maximum of about 65 characters per line; others suggest running lines no longer than six inches. This often means using larger type, itself a plus for readability. The trade-off, of course, may be either less content or more pages per issue.

Graphic elements can make the format more attractive. Creative use of white space helps -- for example, an extra point of leading between lines or paragraphs or wider margins all around. A side margin can be used for pull-out quotes, author information, and even titles. A logo in reduced size can be a bullet for each item.

Paragraphs can be made shorter, and they can be placed in a staggered pattern.

Don't overlook the possibility of a format smaller than $8\frac{1}{2}$" x 11".

The Learning Research Center at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, employs it nicely in its *Teaching-Learning Issues*. Mixing a one-column format with formats of more than one column, once a *verboten* practice among purists, is another possibility. The popular *Teaching Professor* uses this approach quite effectively. Some newsletters set more immediate news in one-column, often as an insert, with longer, undated articles in multiple-column.

How can you decide what to do?

If you are just getting into newsletter production, consider the one-column format as a viable possibility, especially if you’re short of time and help.

If you’re already in a one-column format but you’re unhappy with it, consider redesigning, using some of the suggestions above.

If you’re in a format of two or more columns, but want to gain some of the benefits of the simpler format, consider dropping down to the one-column format for part of your copy.

If you and your readers are entirely happy with whatever format you’re in, there’s no need to change. Stay with a winner.

Linc. Fisch is a faculty development consultant and a co-editor of *The Muse*.
Filings

Muse news to use

In the last two issues of The Muse, this column reported articles that could be reprinted in campus newsletters. In this issue, we continue that and include other information that editors might put to ready use.

• Reprint
  Don Forrester’s "Professor Visits Socrates ... " in the Spring 1991 issue of Reaching through Teaching (Kennesaw State College) describes a teacher whose auto accident lands him temporarily in another world and at the feet of the famous Greek philosopher. The ensuing conversation is a wonderfully-crafted and succinct description (about 900 words) of inquiry as a method of teaching. A sample:

  PROFESSOR: But, Socrates, I had so many questions to ask you. Instead, you’ve asked all the questions.

  SOCRATES: I am sorry. It’s what I do. I have always maintained my own ignorance, but when I ask questions, I learn and my students learn. The moment I start giving answers, their sense of inquiry goes to sleep and the lesson is over.

  For a copy contact Don Forrester, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Kennesaw State College, P.O. Box 444, Marietta, GA 30061, (404) 423-6410.

• Conference sessions
  Two conferences this year will offer "clinic" sessions on improving newsletter content and design: Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Toronto, Ontario, June 20-23; and POD, Wesley Chapel, Florida, October 22-25. In both instances, a panel of successful editors will focus on newsletter problems and solutions, as well as offer individual consultation.

• Teaching Excellence
  For three years, POD has published essays that meld theory and practice into short articles that are useful to teachers. They can be duplicated for all faculty, reprinted in newsletters, and used as a basis for discussions. A sample is enclosed with this issue of The Muse. Subscription information is contained therein. Among next year’s eight issues of Teaching Excellence are pieces on active learning, disciplinary cultures, thinking and learning, and power in the classroom.

• Editors’ resources
  "Resources that Help Amateur Editors Produce Professional-Quality Newsletters" by Ken Zahorski and Linc. Fisch, is an annotated bibliography of 23 print resources. It appeared in the Journal of Staff, Program, & Organizational Development, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1990) pp. 115-122.

Book Review

Language on a Leash by Bruce O. Boston

If the "Short and Simple Vigi­lantes" have their way, what becomes of style? What are the dangers of "editing down" to readers? Of what importance are rituals to the writer? How can editors help the writers they supervise to develop their own styles? What tools can we use to clear our writing of jargon, the "weedpatch of language"? How are editors like "seed crystals"? Which "must" texts should editors keep on their bookshelves? What makes "team editing" so difficult? When does writing the way you talk get you into trouble?

These are but a few of the dozens of intriguing questions Bruce Boston wisely, sometimes playfully, and always engagingly, grapples with in Language on a Leash.

A slim, but substantive volume, Language is a collection of Boston’s essays, most of which were originally published in "THE LOGO*PHILE" column of The Editorial Eye, a monthly newsletter for publications professionals. Of the seven sections, editors will probably find II ("The Writer’s Notebook"), III ("The Editor’s Notebook"), and V ("The Editorial Temperament") particularly useful and enlightening.

It would be a mistake, however, to neglect the others. Whether extolling the virtues of Helen Turabian’s classic Manual, examining the venerable pedigree of the conjunction "and," or warning against "modifier madness," Boston always has something of importance to say.

And he has a knack for making his point in a witty and memorable fashion. Note, for example, his concluding thoughts about the use of very: "In the end, very winds up being a prop for a word or sentence that can get along well without it, a bit of baggage that weighs things down, or too dull a knife to split a semantic hair. Maybe if we used it less, it might get a little stronger. In the meantime, I’m very determined to swear off."

There are plenty of texts that satisfy an editor’s technical needs, but few which also feed the soul and lift the spirit. Boston’s book does all three.

Ken Zahorski

Design Review

York University’s CORE illustrates an appealing blend of graphic elements

The only "art" in York University’s CORE is the nameplate and the stylized apple logo derived from it. Yet this newsletter illustrates how to blend type variations, white space, and other graphic elements to create an artistic, visually attractive publication.

The lead article on page one is set in one-column format, matched with an index of interior material (certainly desirable for a newsletter of this many pages). The basic interior format is two-column, occasionally varied with boxed one-column elements that span a page. In the issue we examined, one interior article is set in one-column; it could benefit from a shorter line-length.

Three unadorned horizontal rules head each interior page, echoing the rules against which the nameplate is set. A single rule defines page bottoms. More white space at top and bottom margins than is usually found in newsletters creates an open, spacious feeling to the pages.

Headlines are nicely sized and set downstyle; for the most part, they are flush-left. Kickers are often used above the main heads. Text is comfortably ragged-right.

The type font is consistent throughout the publication. The outlines of boxed items would benefit from similar consistency.

The apple logo reappears in a calendar of events and in the mailing panel. It might be used with discretion in other locations -- for example, to signal the end of authored articles or to decorate page heads.

The editor of this two-year-old publication reports that it is still evolving. We think it has come a long way already.

-- L.B., L.F., K.Z.

Jan V. White
Editing by Design

By an aware use of expressive graphic elements and a purposeful relationship of words, pictures, and space, design becomes communication, not mere ornament.
Editor to editor

LeAne H. Rutherford

This is a funny business we are in. I bet when you were a kid and some grownup said, "And what do you want to be when you grow up?" you didn't say, "I want to be a newsletter editor." I'll bet you didn't even know what an editor was. In fact, I'll bet, if you are anything like me, that you are still defining yourself in editorial terms.

At first when this job landed in my lap, I thought that editors edited. That assumes a lot. It assumes a body of something to edit. But I soon discovered that I was a collector, solicitor, and writer of something to edit. Seeking became part of the job description.

Then I quickly discovered that what I sought was often not of the right size or shape for the newsletter. So I began to prepare the material for the use that I would make of it: kneading, shaping, trimming, smoothing, tucking, plumping, and even fluffing. (There is no small coincidence that journalists refer to "putting the paper to bed.")

However, as if collecting and preparing were not enough, someone had to organize the stuff, too -- sort of arrange it on the plate for the reader. This editor-business began to look as though it was not for sissies.

But now, four years into the job, I think I know what an editor does: an editor chooses. More than anything else, we make decisions that really override all the other functions. "Editor" is my name and choice-making is my game. Pretty heady stuff, all that power. And hard work, too. But with some operating principles to guide me, I have managed to avoid being absolutely corrupted by the power and only minimally overwhelmed by the work.

The simple editorial assumptions I have made and from which my operating principles are derived make choice-making fairly easy. If the overall goal is to have the newsletter be read, then the following will help to reach that goal:

1. People will read what they need.
   I will make utility the key word with which to measure the content.

2. People will read what they own.
   I will solicit articles from faculty on our campus.

3. Writing is not a popular activity.
   I will collaborate with faculty authors to make the writing as comfortable and rewarding as possible.

4. Visual is as important as verbal.
   I will make my newsletter as easily identifiable, appealing, and inviting as possible for the busy reader.

Now let's discuss each of these assumptions more fully.

Utility

Granted, not everything that goes into the newsletter is useful to all readers all the time, but the measuring stick (one-size fits most) which is handiest for choosing content is the utility factor: Can faculty use this information to make changes in their desires, their philosophy, their methods, or in their integration with the teaching community?

What is useful to faculty members? If they want to continue to improve their teaching, they may need some of the following:

- announcements of services and workshops
- strategies and tips
- information
- insights into student behaviors
- reinforcements, rewards, and recognition
- debates.

See Editor, Supplement, page 2
For example, "Springboard to the Professoriate," lead article in the enclosed Instructional Development newsletter, explains the dual-function of the Tutoring Center at the University of Minnesota-Duluth which extends the classroom as well as feeds tutors into the pipeline to the professoriate. That article served yet another role -- as a draw for one of the workshops advertised in this edition. "Egalitarian Teaching" (p. 5) permits readers a glimpse into the "class act" of a colleague selected for his teaching talents. "The Safe Classroom" presents a rationale for and an example of ground rules aimed at fostering class discussions. In addition, the article generated a debate with ideologically-differing faculty who are concerned that the cure may be worse than the disease.

Besides meeting the utility criterion, all of these were in-house publications.

Ownership
To promote ownership at UMD of Instructional Development (and that holds true for instructional development without the capital letters, as well) and to entice readers, my goal is to have 90-100% of each issue written by faculty folks here to faculty folks here. Readers have a proprietary interest in a publication that is homegrown.

I intentionally invite articles, and I listen intently to all conversations that might yield even a whiff of potential publications. Of course, the vagaries of time, topic, and tendency to write leave me constantly off-balance in planning the content for the next issue. However, I have made an editorial choice. Homegrown articles are worth whatever they cost in time, torment, and tribulation.

Collaboration
Writing is not a popular activity for many people and for good reason. It's hard work with an unpredictable output. Ideas and words may come in a flood or a trickle -- or not at all. It's lonely work with starvation wages. Above all, it's risky -- especially to write for a local audience. So faculty need encouragement and support for their ideas, in their process, and for their product. As an editor, that is where I come in with differing degrees of diplomacy and hand-holding for each contributor.

Faculty need to trust the editor not to make them look foolish, feel foolish, or be foolish. They need to rely on the editor for whatever degree of assistance they want in narrowing, shaping, fleshing out, dressing up and presenting their work. But under it all is the knowledge that the relationship is truly symbiotic. It's win-win or lose-lose. Because our fates are fused, I collaborate with faculty authors to make the writing as comfortable and rewarding as possible. (Besides, it's fun!)

The visual
Visual, verbal; form and substance intertwine. When I lay out my newsletter, I long to be a Japanese steeped in the tradition and art of presentation. Then, perhaps, I could be unconsciously competent when offering up my work to my readers. As it is, I labor over layout using a few simple dicta to guide me.

- Decrease the amount of print; increase "leisure" or white space. If it looks like work to read it, it may not be read. (Do as I say, however, not as I do.)
- Use headings, boxes, lines, screening, lists, pull-quotes, etc. to break up the ponderous black print and to make the newsletter appear to be a "quick read."
- To create reader identification and expectation, echo the logo, size, paper, and masthead from issue to issue; echo visual patterns within an issue when possible.
- Use illustrations, photos, and cartoons -- but only as they relate to and reinforce the content. Avoid kitsch.
- Choose clean print font and paper that accepts print crisply.
- Employ color to make the newsletter easily retrievable from a stack of incoming, equally compelling mail.
- Think like a photographer. Look at each page and each two-page spread as a total visual entity seen through a viewfinder.

An unarticulated assumption
When things don't work, change them. We may be set in type, but we're not cast in stone. Assuming that visual presentation is important, in the next issue of Instructional Development I want to experiment more fully with the format. As a professional malcontent, I choose to continue to struggle, to develop, to err, to re-evaluate, to re-envision, and to refine. To borrow from Browning, "Ah, but an editor's reach should exceed her grasp, or what's a heaven for?"
Springboard to the Professoriate

by

Paul Treuer and LeAne Rutherford

Often problems to which there seem to be no solutions submerge us. But occasionally, a problem arises for which a solution surfaces easily. This article reports on that co-emergence of problem and solution. Faculty shortages in higher education will occur soon. Top students who have been participating in a credit based peer tutoring program may be one source for replenishing the professoriate.

The words “tutoring center” bring to most peoples’ minds legions of underprepared students dragging themselves reluctantly to the court of last resort before being sentenced to academic death—flunking out. Not only is this reaction erroneous (Data indicate that 74% of the students using the UMD Tutoring Center have a C or better grade when seeking tutoring.), but it places the emphasis exclusively on the person being tutored and not on the tutor.

However, focus is shifting at universities from the tutored to the tutor. Like people who first see the vase and then the face in an optical illusion, attention is moving from an old theoretical base (a small core of tutors helping weaker students) to a new model of mutuality in which tutors and tutored both benefit.

Necessity dictates this broader view. There is no way teachers alone can shoulder the task of teaching in a society which is increasingly more passive and in which the information explosion creates new and overwhelming demands on faculty time and energy.

Education must become more collaborative and recursive. The medical model in which learning and learning-through-teaching alternate throughout a career may come closer to meeting the needs of education in the future than the present compartmentalized system in which teacher and learner are discrete roles. Peer tutoring integrates those roles. Tutors constantly upgrade their skills through teaching others what they have just learned. In addition, they sample the pleasures and perplexities of teaching in a kind of apprenticeship. Tutoring brings out the teacher in many tutors and becomes a springboard to the professoriate.

THE NEEDS OF ’97

Current research by Bower and Sosa (1989) predicts a need for a 92% increase in the number of doctorates in the humanities and social sciences and a 64% increase in the number of new doctorates in the arts and sciences to meet the demand for faculty positions for 1997 if present trends continue. Combined with a documented, decreasing interest of today’s college freshmen in teaching and research (Lozier and Dooris, 1987) even greater difficulty in meeting the demands for the professoriate of the future is indicated.

Ernest Boyer in his Scholarship Reconsidered (1990) states, “Clearly, the vitality of scholarship is threatened if the pool of recruits dwindles. As David Riesman put it, the academy must protect its seed corn and aggressive steps must be taken now to recruit into the professoriate the brightest and the best.” To meet the demand in both quantity and quality, we must begin proselytizing for the profession early. The time to inspire and develop teaching skills for future academics is at the under-
graduate level. Peer tutoring provides for a vigorous intellectual exchange which inspires and prepares the highest achieving students to continue their academic studies. If teachers are to be recruited from the ranks of the brightest and best, they must be exposed to the allure of teaching early to ascertain if higher education might be a career path for them.

Furthermore, if they choose a career in higher education, they need instruction in effective teaching before they arrive at universities as graduate teaching assistants. Yes, as universities recognize their responsibility to help graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) to be successful teachers, many institutions are initiating TA training programs. However, the majority of TA programs are too little, too late. Although they are brief (several days to several weeks) and are diffused by being combined with other orientation issues, their worst flaw lies in the waste of potential teaching talent that never considered higher education as a career option. The combustible time to inspire and train people is at the undergraduate level where a structured tutorial experience may ignite their desire to pursue graduate studies for the purpose of entering the academic profession.

The University of Minnesota, Duluth, has a credit-based tutoring program designed to prepare academically high-achieving students for teaching responsibilities. During the 1990-91 academic year, 223 undergraduates and 4 graduate students were peer tutors, resulting in 12,061 student-tutor contacts.

**BENEFITS TO TUTORS**

Besides helping the tutored to thrive academically, what benefits accrue to the tutors? Their personal development is enhanced in at least three areas: scholarship, instructional experience, and integration into the collegiate community.

Tutors can take charge of their own scholastic destinies. Tutoring reinforces what tutors have learned themselves; it helps them to develop an understanding of their own learning processes and to practice metacognition; it challenges them to take a more active role in determining their own course of and methods in learning; it appropriately bolsters their confidence; and it fosters a love of learning.

Tutoring provides valuable instructional experience as well. Tutors become aware of the differences in learning styles in those they assist, and they become creative in finding ways to open doors to understanding. As tutors are exposed to diverse student populations, empathy unfolds; helping and communication skills grow; and their cognitive development accelerates as they work through problem solving with the people they are tutoring. Black and white answers are replaced by multiple means of arriving at potentially effective solutions. "What's the answer?" is replaced by "How can we find the answer?" "Solving" replaces "solution."

Finally, tutoring integrates tutors into the academic community. It confers status through recognizing the academic worth of tutors. It connects tutors to both their contemporaries and their academic teachers/mentors. Too, tutoring provides tutors, as academic middlemen and women, a taste of professional responsibility while they make the transition from being solely students to being collaborators in learning and teaching.

As a component of the peer tutoring experience in the Achievement Center at UMD, tutors were asked to reflect on their experience, and they consistently acknowledged the high value of tutoring to themselves as well as to the students they assist. Speaking for themselves, tutors had these kinds of things to say when asked if tutoring was a worthwhile experience:

- I'll hit the road running when I enter my teaching career.
- I'm learning (relearning) problem solving techniques.
- I've learned as much as I've taught

What did tutors find most rewarding? "Seeing the look on a tutee's face when he understands what I'm telling him"; "Having a student come in totally con-
fused, and leave totally confident”; “Explaining a concept to a student and then hearing her turn around and explain it to someone else”; “Being able to help someone just enough to let him discover the solution for himself.”

Scott Anderson, formerly a business/economics tutor and presently a graduate student, observed: “The most rewarding part of tutoring turned out to be the feeling I got from helping my fellow students understand and succeed in a subject I enjoy so much. This is a part of the job I didn’t expect. I learned something I didn’t know before about myself, and it strengthened my conviction to pursue a career in economics. The most challenging part of tutoring was adjusting my teaching style to match each student’s individual needs. I soon realized that everybody learns differently ... .”

In a UMD survey of graduating tutors, May, 1991, 38% said the tutoring experience influenced their decisions on their future profession; 39.6% indicated that graduate school or professional school was in their immediate plans after graduating; and 34.5% responded that they aspired to a Ph.D. as a final degree. It appears that the tutoring experience has professionally positive consequences.

**FACULTY REACTION**

For credit based peer tutoring to work, faculty need to understand, approve of and advocate for the program. In general, faculty members support credit-based peer tutoring at UMD.

Built-in safeguards allay faculty fears over the quality of instruction provided by tutors. Faculty in each department set the standards for tutors in that discipline and control who tutors. (Departments send letters to their potential tutors notifying them that they qualify.) Furthermore, tutors are trained in credited, upper-division classes (SSP 3003 and 3004) in, for example, strategies and techniques, learning styles, special populations, adult learners, and Socratic methods. Moreover, to protect them from overextending themselves tutorially, tutors are limited to three to four hours per week in the Center. Informed faculty generally agree that tutors augment, not supplant, their relationship to their students. And tutors are trained not to overstep their bounds. “I don’t know” and “Let me refer you to ...” are emphasized as appropriate responses when the situation calls for it.

**ACTION**

Those who favor the idea of credit-based peer tutoring can further its ends by being aware of which courses have tutoring available; by encouraging students encountering academic difficulties to use the service; and, finally, by recommending it to their best students who may be motivated by it to consider college teaching as a career. Tutoring could become a springboard to academic attraction and action.

**References:**


The Tutoring Center is an area in UMD’s Achievement Center where free, walk-in tutoring is available daily for all UMD students. Peer tutors, selected by academic departments and trained in the Achievement Center, provide assistance to students in numerous subject areas. Currently these include accounting, biology, chemistry, composition, economics, French, mathematics, music theory, and physiology.

In addition to these tutoring services, the Tutoring Center provides referral for other sources of tutoring on campus and arranges private tutoring.

Supportive Services courses are offered each quarter for qualified students wishing to tutor: Tutor Training (SSP 3003) and the Tutoring Practicum (SSP 3004). Students interested in either of these courses should speak with Paul Treuer (Library 178), Kathy Clark (Library 123), Dale Olson (Library 121), or Mary Duff (Library 143).

Coordinated through the Supportive Services Program, the Tutoring Center is part of the Achievement Center’s efforts to academically empower students. For all students at UMD, the Achievement Center can be not only a springboard, but also a safety net when they need it. In addition to the Supportive Services Program, the undergirdings for this net include the Access Center, Equity Programs, Career and Placement Services, Orientation, and Leadership Programs.
EGALITARIAN TEACHING: 
Uncommon Teaching with a Common Touch 

by Rick Lichty

At the undergraduate level, bringing faculty research into the classroom also helps bring economic theory to an understandable level for the student. A faculty member is obligated to constantly attempt to make her/his field “relevant” to an undergraduate student through the introduction of applications of the discipline to “real world” problems whenever possible.

These views lead to my overriding conclusion that a faculty member needs to be accessible to the students. Hints of this philosophy run through my earlier statements. Accessibility means diminishing the apparent class differences between faculty and student and taking the time and effort to sponsor clubs, to attend student events, and to attempt to bring the student into the profession. Accessibility also means being available, not just in terms of time, but in terms of an open willingness to work with the student to help learning take place. Research is essential to a faculty member’s professional development. But research should not lead to inaccessibility since accessibility is also a major responsibility of our profession.

If possible, a faculty member involved in undergraduate education should include students in the research process whenever possible. We should actively seek undergraduate students to join in research efforts, whether through the UROP grant or through other sponsored research grants. Such efforts go a long way toward encouraging the student to become excited about the possibilities for learning that can take place only through the research process.

Finally, I feel that a faculty member should be willing to take a chance in finding new ways to approach a topic. For example, Curt Anderson and I worked on a video tape to introduce the otherwise difficult topic of benefit/cost analysis to students. I am currently working on a one-person show as Karl Marx for a class on alternative economic philosophies. While I don’t believe all faculty need to try stage acting in this way, other attempts at finding new approaches to a topic should be a continual focus of a teacher.

Invention, informality, interaction, accessibility, relevance, applicability, and inclusivity are useful approaches to a more egalitarian education.
Last summer I attended a faculty institute designed to transform the undergraduate curriculum into one which would be more inclusive of the extensive diversity evident in American society. Our purpose at this institute was to begin transforming the curriculum by revising a selected syllabus for classes serving a large student population. To prepare to reach that objective, institute participants had three solid weeks' worth of reading, films, speakers, and group discussions on pedagogical issues associated with gender and multicultural concerns.

One of the most useful and enlightening discoveries among the literature was Lynn Weber Cannon’s “Fostering Positive Race, Class, and Gender Dynamics in the Classroom” which contains ground rules for class discussion. Indeed, the goal of these ground rules is to create a “safe” environment for class interactions. I adapted and incorporated these ground rules into each of my syllabi. Slightly paraphrased, my adaptations are as follows:

We can assume that discrimination exists in many forms (e.g., sexism, racism, classism, ageism, homophobia, anti-semitism, ableism, etc.). Any critical understanding of these various-isms means that we need to recognize that we have been taught misinformation about our own group as well as about members of other groups. This is true for both dominant (e.g., white, male, upper class, heterosexual, able-bodied, etc.) and subordinated (e.g. people of color, women, poor, and working class, gay/lesbian, disabled, Jew, etc.) group members. Based on these assumptions, then, let’s agree that we cannot be blamed for misinformation we have learned, but we will be held accountable for repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise. People and groups are not to be blamed for their subordinate positions. Let’s assume that people are always doing the best they can. Let’s actively pursue information about our own groups and those of others. Let us share information about our own groups with other members of the class but never demean, devalue, or in any way put down people for their experiences. We each have an obligation to actively combat the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls which prohibit group cooperation and group gain. Let’s create a safe environment for open discussion.

Shortly after returning from this summer institute on “Integrating Gender and Multicultural Perspectives,” I found myself in the unexpected position of defending my newfound enthusiasm for an inclusive curriculum. A section of my syllabus intended to provide for the acceptance of diversity in the classroom elicited reactions from some of my colleagues that challenged me on several levels: from my commitment to academic freedom to my belief in freedom of speech. As professor of journalism who is dedicated to promoting and protecting the First Amendment, I must admit I was astonished by these challenges (How could anyone assert that I was somehow being restrictive of expression?). What I’ve come to realize is that the classroom is not an ordinary public forum. It is a restricted environment. This is not to say that it should be a restrictive environment, but it should be a responsible environment, and that implies certain rules and obligations which structure the class. I believe we have an obligation to create a safe milieu for learning. The ground rules given above are designed to do just that.

Let’s assume that people are always doing the best they can.

For me, the essence of these ground rules is creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. I want those individuals who may not be a part of a mainstream power base (whether it is by virtue of race, class, gender, sexual preference, religion or physical capability) to feel that they are valued. I want my classroom to include all people. We cannot do that if certain members of the class are cast in the role of “other” or “outsider” by virtue of classroom topics or discussion. When, through the use of epithets or stereotypical myths, students are identified as not being like everyone else, there is a danger that they will be shut out and closed off from the classroom activities. By asserting the need for mutual respect, I hope to embrace the differences that exist in our society and also in our classes. I want to propel more and further-reaching discussion by welcoming diversity. I want all students in my classes to feel that they could participate and that their participation would be welcomed and valued.

Contrary to the popular myth, our society is NOT a melting pot or a patchwork quilt. It is a complex chemical mishmash that sometimes explodes if it’s not treated with care. It exploded in the late sixties, and it’s in danger of exploding again. Racism is not dead in the United States; neither is sexism or
RELLECTING ON WORKSHOPS AND LIFE IN THE CLASSROOM:
IF I WERE TO WRITE MY OWN OBITUARY....

Linc. Fisch, an educational consultant on college teaching from Lexington, Kentucky, presented four instructional development workshops for seventy faculty at UMD, September 26 and 27: Strategic Teaching; To Lecture or Not to Lecture; The Classroom as a Dramatic Arena; and Poetry, Passion and Pedagogy. The three alliterative Ps of Poetry, Passion and Pedagogy might have been joined by a fourth P—Pondering. Linc. posed questions for teachers—questions whose exploration can lead to rewarding reflection, discussion, and self-growth.

Some of the essence of “Poetry, Passion and Pedagogy” can be captured by the following excerpt from Linc’s recent Chalkdust column in the Journal of Staff, Program, & Organization Development:

As teachers, we know the importance of asking questions effectively (whether in class or on tests) and of teaching students how to ask their own questions. But all too seldom do we turn important questions on ourselves. I began to speculate on some of the key questions we should be reflecting upon and discussing with our colleagues. Here’s my list.

- What activities in teaching give me the greatest satisfaction? What causes me to come away from a class feeling really high?
- What do I do that seems to produce good response in students — not just positive comments but eager attention, intelligent questions, and desire to engage the material?
- What modifications can I make in my teaching in order to increase the frequency of the wonderful moments referred to above?
- Why did I decide to go into teaching? How can I work to enhance the attainment of the goals implied in that choice?
- What values inform my teaching?
- What are my greatest strengths and talents? How can I bring these resources to bear more directly and more fully on my teaching?
- What emerging emphases of my department and my college could be aided by the application of my personal strengths and talents?
- In what personal and professional activities would I like to be engaged five years from now? What sequence of steps can I initiate now to bring these goals to fruition?
- If I had the freedom to spend the next day doing exactly what I want (without regard to schedule, commitments, and responsibilities), what would I do?
- If I had the power (without constraints of budget, approval, or politics) to make three changes in my teaching and professional activities, what would they be?
- If I were to present my very last lecture to students or conduct my last class session, what would it contain?
- If I were to write my own obituary, what would I say (or like to be able to say) about the accomplishments in my life’s work?
- Which of my teaching colleagues and administrators do I like to work with the least? Why? What steps could I initiate to improve our working relationship?
- What three questions about teaching and teachers do I think are the most important to ask and to have answered?

Of course, this short list of questions for teachers is by no means exhaustive, but it’s a good start. I find that dealing with questions usually leads to more questions—questions that are better and more refined. A good question, as John Ciardi put more eloquently, “is not a bolt to be tightened in place, but a seed to be planted and to bear more seed toward the hope of greening the landscape of idea.”

The Safe Classroom, continued from page 6

homophobia, or ageism, classism, anti-semitism (or other religious prejudices), or ableism. Humans are so imperfect that life in any society is a constant struggle. One way to ease the struggle is to acknowledge and accept the differences that exist among us. So, do these ground rules restrict freedom of speech and expression? Does the effort to squelch hateful words impinge on students’ academic freedom? No. While these rules do restrict name-calling, they don’t restrict discussion of ideas. The U.S. Supreme Court has recognized “fighting words” as unprotected by the First Amendment. As Pember explains in his Mass Media Law (3rd ed.), The Supreme Court identified fighting words as a category of speech in which the application of prior censorship would not necessarily constitute a violation of the First Amendment. In Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire (1942) Justice Frank Murphy wrote:

There are certain well-defined and narrowly limited classes of speech the prevention and punishment of which have never been thought to raise any constitutional problems. These include ... fighting words—those which by their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite an immediate breach of the peace (1984).

I would like to suggest that name-calling can be viewed as a form of fighting words. Most of us have been sensitized about the impact of the words “queer” or “gimp.” It’s not too difficult to imagine the anger a woman feels when she hears another person say, “What a dumb broad.” Language has power. Fighting words inspire an intense emotional response that at worst leads to violence and possible bloodshed. All freedoms are limited because (to roll out yet another cliche) with freedom comes responsibility.

Ironically, I believe that the ground rules (restricting though they might appear) actually further discussion (and thus enhance academic freedom) by creating a climate in which all students feel free and able to express their opinions. In an informal survey of students in each of my classes this quarter I have yet to encounter someone who feels repressed by these ground rules. One non-traditional student approached me the first night of class and said, “I really appreciate these ground rules. Thank you for including them.” I’m happy to report that her contributions to class (including speeches on abuse and the 1920 lynchings in Duluth) were the most thought-provoking and challenging ideas the class heard all quarter. The fundamental assumption that people are doing the best they can establishes an attitude of respect for each other as people. In so doing we avoid the pitfalls of name-calling and slur-slinging. My students tell me that they feel invited to offer their own points of view in these class discussions, and that makes me think these ground rules work. One student in my mass lecture class of 168 students said, “I really like our class discussions. It makes me feel as though I have something important to say.” When students feel safe, the floodgates open for more diverse expression. Articulating personal positions empowers people. Allowing the use of hurtful and hateful names and myths/mis-information empowers some at the expense of others. I prefer the former mode.

When students feel safe, the floodgates open for more diverse expression.

One of the most important lessons I’ve learned from the workshop, from creating rules for a safe classroom environment, and from the subsequent discussion of those rules is that curricular transformation begins at the personal level. As a person and teacher in the process of transforming myself and my educational environs, I acknowledge that no one person has a corner on truth and that in my classes as we look for truth, no one will be punished for disagreeing with ideas. We can talk about any ideas the class agrees to discuss, but we will do so with respect for each other as human beings—in a safe classroom.

Reference:
DESIGNING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES for INTERACTION and EQUALITY

LINDA HILSEN
Instructional Development Service
Senior Consultant and Workshop Coordinator,
UMD

Thursday, February 13, 1992
1:00 - 3:30 pm
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

or

Friday, February 14, 1992
9:00 - 11:30 am
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

Each of us is trying to model for our students the thought processes of our discipline, but underlying this are the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher and the relationships among students. How can we prevent inadvertent discrimination in our classrooms to create a richer, more equal learning environment for all students?

- What can you do to make coeducation equal education?
- In a classroom filled with 200 students, how do you give students the sense of being engaged?
- How do you make students in any size class feel good about what they are doing?
- Do students want more tests, more homework?
- Do most of your student responses come from the first volunteer?
- Can a teacher's gender play a role in classroom discussion?
- Do students truly learn more when working in pairs? Even on computers?
- How do you provide the motive force, the catalyst, the impetus to energize your students and yourself?

Sponsored by the UMD Commission on Women, Hilsen attended the Harvard Graduate School of Education Conference "Women and Men in the Classroom: Inequality and Its Remedies." Her attendance and her work with UMD colleagues sparked interest in the topics of getting started on the right foot, invitational teaching, tips on questioning and discussion, inquiry teaching, handling emotional content, and gender related climate issues, which will be discussed in this workshop. Hilsen will also relate findings of The Harvard Assessment Seminar First Report, 1990. Participants will leave with ideas to use in the classroom tomorrow. In addition, models will be introduced which can be adapted to your class to enable you to design classroom activities for interaction and equality.

Significant handouts and succulent treats will be indiscriminately shared with all in attendance.

RETURN TO: LINDA HILSEN, IDS, LIBRARY 143
Designing Classroom Activities for Interaction and Equality

Name: ____________________________ Department: ____________________________
Campus Address: ________________________ Campus Phone: ________________________

☐ I will attend Thursday, February 13, 1992 1:00 - 3:30 pm
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

☐ I will attend Friday, February 14, 1992 9:00 - 11:30 am
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

The University of Minnesota, Duluth is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
BUILDING ACADEMIC COMMUNITY
by
EXTENDING YOUR CLASSROOM

Paul Treuer
Coordinator of the Tutoring Center and Graduate Teaching Assistant Training, UMD
Kathy Allen
Director, Supportive Services Program
Mary Duff
Supervisor, Tutoring Center

Thursday, January 30, 1992
1:00 - 3:00 pm
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

or

Friday, January 31, 1992
9:00 - 11:00 am
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

As teachers we want to create fertile learning environments for our students. According to The Harvard Assessment Seminars First Report, 1990, students believe the majority of their learning takes place outside of the classroom. Obviously, we need to positively impact the out-of-class educational climate of a given class by extending our classrooms. How can we effectively do this?

In this interactive session, Paul Treuer and colleagues will share tested strategies to extend the academic community of a class. You will leave this session aware of campus resources and specific techniques you can use to improve your students' educational experience. You will experience a variety of these strategies in action. Out-of-class networking, student-run review sessions, and collaborative learning projects will all be explored.

Helpful handouts and healthful hors d'oeuvres will help hold you to your New Year's resolutions!

RETURN TO: LINDA HILSEN, IDS, LIBRARY 143
Building Academic Community by Extending Your Classroom

Name: __________________________
Department: _______________________
Campus Address: ____________________
Campus Phone: _______________________

☐ I will attend Thursday, January 30
1:00 - 3:00 pm
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

☐ I will attend Friday, January 31
9:00 - 11:00 am
Kirby Student Center Ballroom A

The University of Minnesota, Duluth is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
SO MUCH CONTENT, SO LITTLE TIME

Marilla D. Svinicki
The University of Texas

If there's one lament that I've heard over and over again from teachers it's the statement "I have too much content to cover!" It lies behind much of the resistance to change in teaching methods which I have encountered and has probably killed more innovations than any administrative dictates or situational constraints ever could. Surely with a little effort, we could think of a way of alleviating the problem rather than letting it dictate our instructional choices.

Let's begin by examining the assumptions which might lie behind our felt need to "cover" the content. If content must be "covered" in class in order to be learned, are we implying that mere exposure is both necessary and sufficient for learning?

In the first place, merely being exposed to content is not sufficient for learning. It is not the lecture which produces learning; it is the studying, summarizing and organizing of lecture notes on which learning depends. In the second place, it is equally inaccurate to assume that learning can only occur within the context of the class period or interaction with the instructor. In reality a great deal of learning occurs outside the classroom when students are grappling with the content by themselves. When instructors recognize that it is the struggle that produces learning, they design their classes so that some of the struggle will occur during classtime where they can intervene in the process and save the students some frustration and time.

An insistence on covering the content in class may also inadvertently communicate to the students that it is only what occurs during classtime that is worthwhile. What they do on their own is a pale reflection of truth, which is only revealed in class. Is it any wonder that students complain when something on the exam "was never covered in class?" Haven't we communicated to them, however subtly, that it is what occurs in class that matters?

One way to approach this problem is by viewing it as an exercise in time management: too much to do, not enough time to do it. Time management procedures seem to divide themselves into two categories: (1) making the quantity of work manageable and (2) streamlining the process of working. The analogous instructional categories might be viewed as: (1) making the amount of content manageable and (2) streamlining the learning process.

Making the amount of content manageable

In time management one of the first things one is advised to do is set realistic goals and priorities. This seems like an obvious first step in content management as well. It will, however, necessitate abandoning the "pack rat" syndrome of content selection (that affliction in which we never abandon a bit of information because at one time it was useful and it may be again some day). As new information arises, it is simply poured into the course without any of the old stuff being drained out. That cannot continue forever; sooner or later, the cup runneth over. To avoid this spillage, the instructor must take a hard look at the content. How much is it realistic to expect students to grasp in the time allotted? If you want to add new information (and you should), something else must go, either in terms of breadth or depth of coverage. If you set firm limits on the amount of information which can be included, then you must also do some priority setting. You must decide which concepts are top priority, which are nice but secondary and which are superfluous, even to the point of sacrificing subtlety in the interest of initial understanding.

A second content management technique might be thought of as "cut to the chase." It is possible that for each concept or skill we are trying to get across to students there is a nugget of information or a component of the skill which is the critical. For example, in problem solving in engineering, mathematics or computer programming, the critical skill is setting up the problem; the rest is mechanics. Of course the mechanics are important, but they need not be a component of every assignment or discussion once they have been mastered. One way of condensing content is to concentrate primarily on that critical skill of problem set up with only occasional prods to the support mechanics. Not every problem needs to be worked to completion.

A third content management suggestion has to do with the management of resources. Good time managers seek outside resources to help them solve their time problems. The analog in instruction would have us look beyond the bounds of the classroom and the single

(Continued on back)
course for a possible solution to our content crunch. In the first case, if we can admit to the possibility that not all content need be learned by all students, we might save a little time by making some of the content available in alternative formats to those students interested in pursuing topics repeatedly or in more depth. For example, the use of videotaped lectures as supplements, either for remediation or enrichment, might make us feel less guilty about not packing every bit of content into the classtime itself.

In the second case a departmental, cross-course analysis of content might reveal areas in which content is being reviewed in several courses unnecessarily while other concepts are being neglected because of a perceived time crunch. By coordinating cross-course objectives more closely, all instructors might be freed to spend less time on content coverage and more on student learning.

Emphasizing the process

A second area in which time management might help us with our coverage problem revolves around the process of learning itself. There are ways of making it more efficient in general and thus allowing more to be learned in a shorter period of time.

One helpful idea is the “routinization of the mundane.” How much time is wasted in class carrying out mundane tasks, such as handing out materials or repeating instructions? If the class agenda followed a consistent pattern (assignments always written on the left end of the board, the first five minutes spent in review, the critical concepts always written in outline form during the lecture, and so on), the routine would alleviate the need for repeated explanations of what’s going on. The routine would become a shorthand way of communicating expectations and information and cut down on the need for time spent on spelling everything out.

At another level of pattern use, the pattern of the content itself can be used to facilitate its own acquisition. An instructor can speed up the learning of content in the latter part of a course by establishing patterns of understanding in the early parts of the course. For example, using the same sequence to analyze each new concept gets the students into a rhythm of analysis so that each concept need not be approached as an entirely new problem. The procedures and patterns already learned can be used to learn the new material, which should then be learned more quickly. This does require that the instructor search for patterns across concepts, but this is part of the fun of scholarship, a search for the bigger pattern behind microconcepts.

A final process technique from time management which might be useful is the idea of using a more efficient storage medium to manage information. In the time management area this means that the individual stops trying to memorize every bit of information, all appointments, all responsibilities and instead works out a system for recording and accessing that information from a more permanent medium such as an appointment book. One way we can increase the efficiency of our students’ learning is to help them learn about the use of such information resources. For example, instead of trying to memorize all the formulas and procedures, students would be far more efficient if they produced an individualized index to their notes and textbooks. The simple step of creating an information retrieval system forces students to organize the information, which is the first step toward learning. Some instructors have used this procedure when they allow students to prepare a study guide which can be brought into the test period and used as reference material, a sort of sanctioned crib sheet.

Work smarter, not harder

The foregoing discussion is meant primarily as a stimulus to your thinking. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive guide to content management. Rather I hoped to use the concepts of time management as a prototype for problem solution. It is not a simple process nor is it painless, but we cannot continue to “cover” everything nor use that plaintive cry as an excuse for continuing the status quo. We must try to solve the problem before it overwhelms us and our students.

Useful Readings in Time Management

The following books are well-known in the area of time management. With a little imagination and inventiveness the ideas they contain might offer the busy instructor some additional ideas about ways to get control of course content and time.
