Section I: Approaches to Teaching

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Preparing a book of readings from our POD members requires us to take time to fully appreciate the talents of our colleagues. This short chapter on approaches to teaching is a fine example. Each of the contributors presents his or her own motivation in re-thinking the classroom experience — one saw the light while watching a football game; another finally tired of “the same old thing.”

Linc Fisch enlightens us with the perspective of coaches. He stresses the importance of individual work in developing a team and the delight of performance with immediate feedback. The fruition of the notion that we stop thinking of ourselves as the experts, the purveyors of all knowledge, and shift to collaborators and skillful designers of the learning environments would be a major step ahead. We owe him one for this insight.

We are reminded of the importance of testing by Marina Estabrook and Daniel Wick. Their careful study at the University of California at Davis sought student descriptions and evaluations of tests they had encountered the previous term. A sample of 200 gives us good information — like students’ least favorite is the multiple choice format. Though not all students are similar to UC-Davis students, it is worth attending to this information in our own student evaluation process.

Finally, Robert Snortland’s delightful report of the Audio-Tutorial graphics course provides us with one approach to the problem of burnout. “Things were going stale...” is a chord so many faculty can hear. This alternative approach reminds me of Golda Meir’s assertion
that a different set of problems is often better than a vacation. But beyond the shot-in-the-arm for the faculty member, he found that students reported greater satisfaction and work-time savings. More for less is a central theme here.

These three articles invite us to reconsider our current teaching styles, to the benefit of both students and faculty.

_Sandra C. Inglis_