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POD Network News

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Spring 2009

## POD Network News, Spring 2009

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## President's Message

### The Economy, Deja Vu, and Hope for the Future

The Spring Core committee meeting in Chicago was a success thanks to consistent and collaborative work by everyone. The Core said 'Thanks and Farewell' to Barbara Millis; Leslie Ortquist-Ahrens; Michael Reder; Catherine Wehlburg; and Tuesday Cooper and welcomed five new members: Kevin Barry, Therese Huston, Laurel Willingham-McLain, Bonnie Mullinix, and Mary Ann Winkelmes. The Executive Committee acknowledged the great work of Matt Ouellett, exiting Past President and Tuesday Cooper, exiting Chair of Finance and Audit Committee, and welcomed two, new members, Peter Felten, President Elect, and Niki Young, new Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. Our focus was on meeting contemporary challenges and as I think of the work we did in Chicago, I travel back in time.

Way back in 1974, as I was starting my journey into the rather uncharted territory of organizational, instructional, and faculty development, *Change Magazine* published a

monograph titled "Faculty development in a time of retrenchment."\* The work described how support for the professoriate could be sustained in difficult fiscal times (Remember the oil embargo and the gas crisis?). In the years since then, there have been other crises that affected, perhaps afflicted, higher education and the broad field of "faculty development." But now seems like a good time to revisit questions related to "Retrenchment" because the current economic situation has not only affected the higher education community directly, it has also affected the sources of our income and those entities that provide support for a range of programs and initiatives beyond typical university curriculum and physical resources. This is perhaps the most serious situation higher education and POD have faced since POD began.

At the spring Core meeting, we had to deal with these new realities and I want to report to you, that the Executive Committee and Core spent much time deliberating the best course(s) of action for POD over the next year and beyond. Particular thanks go to Executive



Director Hoag Holmgren and Past President Virginia Lee for their careful review and clear presentation of the situation and our budget options for the coming year. Our discussions were reasoned and productive because we had a sound starting point in the budget proposal they prepared.

The "bottom line" is this: that while POD remains fiscally sound, we have had to be cautious about the budget. We have had to cut back a little bit on current funding for the moment, but the success of the 2009 conference (especially in terms of registrations) will make a difference in our ability to fund additional activities as well as our future fiscal condition. The good news is that we can affect future POD programs and outcomes by encouraging conference attendance and

– Continued on page 2

# Notes from the POD Office

Time to update your address books: the POD email address has officially changed to [podoffice@podnetwork.org](mailto:podoffice@podnetwork.org)

As you plan for the 2009 annual conference (Oct 28 – Nov 1) please note the expenses and details below. Full registration details will be available on the POD website when registration opens in June.

**Location:** Hyatt Regency Houston, Houston, TX  
(800-233-1234)

**POD Group Room Rates:** \$129

**All conference registration fees will be the same as 2008:**

\$410 (Early-Bird Member)  
\$450 (Regular Member)  
\$505 (Early-Bird NonMember)  
\$545 (Regular NonMember)  
\$290 (Early Bird Student)  
\$350 (Early Bird Retired)

This is a partial list of rates. If you need information about a rate not listed here, please contact me.

Congratulations to the following 2009 POD Start-Up Grant recipients, each of whom received \$300 to support faculty development activities on campus:

**David Schuman, University of Tennessee**  
**Francine Glazer, New York Institute of Technology**  
**Patricia Carson, Long Island University**  
**Davi Michelle Richardson, Marine Corps University**



This summer the POD office will be closed Monday through Friday, June 22-26.

– Hoag Holmgren,  
Executive Director

– *President, continued from page 1*

participation. In other words, I hope to see everyone in Houston, and if you have colleagues in the Houston area, urge them to attend.

The other good news is that we have a number of exciting initiatives in progress. We plan to update and upgrade the POD website, including the Members only section; our Electronic Communications and Resources Committee is looking into ways to expand our virtual capabilities and outreach; our Publications Committee has a stable of successful products and is exploring new forums for member publications; our Diversity Committee continues to support our outreach efforts with travel grants and internships; the Graduate

and Professional Student Development Committee is reinvigorated with its new name, and ready to become more active; our Research Committee is collaborating with our Membership Committee to construct and administer a new, comprehensive survey of POD members, the first in over a decade; the Conference Committee is making plans for Houston and aggressively seeking ways to get sponsored support for the conference; and members of the Core are energized, active, and working closely with committees to insure continued success. As well, we have ad hoc groups looking into new possibilities for collaborations, outreach programs, sponsorships, and issues pertaining leadership models and the continued smooth operation of POD as a (perhaps

“the”) unique professional association whose focus is so directly on higher education teaching and learning, and even more so, on the concepts, scholarship, programs, and conditions that can ensure the success of teachers and learners.

Though we all face uncertain times, I am encouraged by the enthusiasm and energy of all our members and especially, those who volunteer on POD committees and the Core. Without their willingness and effort, we could not grow and accomplish all that we have. I stepped into the President Elect role last year at a sad time, when we lost Leora Baron, and I was not fully knowledgeable of all of POD’s activities. There was a steep learning curve that was made easier by all the help and guidance I received:

indeed it was the kind of help typical of POD. But especially, I want to offer my thanks to Virginia Lee, Hoag Holmgren, Matt Ouellett, and Tuesday Cooper for all the personal help they provided as I began my work with the Executive Committee. I hope I will be able to emulate their model of commitment, dedication, and effort to promote the mission of POD and to work for the benefit of our members.

Good luck and best wishes to you all. Texas awaits us!

– *Mike Theall*

\* Group for Human Development in Higher Education. *Faculty Development in a Time of Retrenchment*. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Change Magazine, 1974.

## Groccia selected as incoming Associate Editor of *To Improve the Academy*

The incoming editor of *To Improve the Academy*, Judith E. Miller, is pleased to announce the selection of James E. Groccia, past president of POD and Director of Auburn University's Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning as

incoming Associate Editor. Jim was chosen from a distinguished field of 15 applicants. The manuscript submission deadline for TIA volume 29 is Dec. 1, 2009, and it's not too early to start working on a submission!



## Belated Welcome to the Core Committee

Joy Morrison, Director of the Office of Faculty Development at University of Alaska Fairbanks, stepped in to join POD's Core Committee in November, 2008, and serves through 2010.



## POD Network grants deadline nears

Proposals for POD Network Grants will be accepted until June 15, 2009. The purpose of the POD grant program is to provide funding to support POD members' efforts to contribute new knowledge that can be applied to the fields of faculty, TA, instructional, and organizational development. The Core Committee has made a total of \$7,000 available for *multiple* awards. The number and size of awards will be determined

by the Grants Committee, based on the quality and potential impact of the work on the POD community and beyond. To learn more, see the guidelines at [http://www.podnetwork.org/grants\\_awards/grant-program.htm](http://www.podnetwork.org/grants_awards/grant-program.htm).

Recent recipients include, Dieter J. Schönewetter, University of Manitoba, & Donna Ellis, University of Waterloo, "Peeling Back the Layers: Competencies in U.S. and Canadian Graduate Student

Development Programs and Developers' Preparation to Teach Them,";

Connie Schroeder, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, "SoTL Program, Institutional Initiatives, and Faculty Development: Researching Models, Attributes, and Practice."

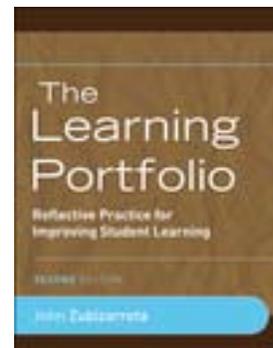
Should you have questions, please contact the POD Grants Committee Chair, Laurel Willingham-McLain, [willingham@duq.edu](mailto:willingham@duq.edu), 412.396.5177, Duquesne University.



## Books by members

Zubizarreta, J. (2009). *The Learning Portfolio: Reflective Practice for Improving Student Learning (2nd Ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Forward by Millis, B.J.



# The National Teaching & Learning FORUM

*The Forum* encourages submissions on any aspect of college teaching and learning. The ideal article falls within a 1500 word limit and, following Thomas Sprat's praise of the Royal Society, holds to a style of writing that reflects a "close, naked, natural way

of speaking." Normally, articles come from faculty, but other voices, including student voices, are welcome. Also, the symbiosis between our printed edition and our web site creates rich opportunities for posting ancillary materials to accompany

submissions. Submit manuscripts to James Rhem at The National Teaching & Learning FORUM, 2203 Regent Street, Suite B, Madison, WI 53726 or via email at [jrhem@chorus.net](mailto:jrhem@chorus.net). OFFICE PHONE: (608) 255-4469. FAX: (509) 267-1146



JOIN US IN FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK FOR  
THE 29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL STLHE CONFERENCE:

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TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
**BETWEEN THE TIDES**

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**JUNE 17 - 20 2009**  
WWW.UNB.CA/STLHE



# 2009 POD Conference

## Welcoming Change: Generations and Regeneration

Proposals have all been submitted and preparations continue for the 2009 POD Conference in Houston, Texas, October 28th through November 1st.

### *Some highlights:*

#### **The conference site:**

In March, the planning team visited the site of the 2009 conference: The Hyatt Regency Houston. The conference space is excellent with sufficient space to meet the needs of our program and a simple layout that will make moving between sessions a snap.

The Hyatt has just completed a renovation that provides us with fantastic facilities. During our visit we were impressed with the friendly and helpful staff. The hotel's public areas are smoke free and the guest rooms are spacious and tastefully decorated. The Hyatt is situated in the heart of downtown Houston with easy access to a wonderful variety of restaurants (above ground and in the Houston tunnel network) the theater district (only two blocks away) and Sabine Park for those who want to get out for a walk or a run (less than 1/2 mile from the hotel).

#### **Proposal review:**

The response to our call for reviewers has once again been terrific. The annual conference is made possible through the work of hundreds of volunteers

who review proposals, work the registration desk, organize parts of the conference, and contribute in many other ways. The quality of the conference relies on a rigorous blind review process. Having so many members contributing their expertise to the review process helps to ensure high quality sessions.

#### **Feedback from 2008 conference:**

We learned a lot from the evaluations participants completed following the 2008 conference. In particular, we are responding to your comments by doing the following:

- maintaining a simplified program with all concurrent sessions kept at 75 minutes;
- continuing the practice of providing a welcome area to welcome newcomers and guide attendees in how to get the most from the conference;
- providing space for informal networking with colleagues;
- extending the vendor exhibit so that it overlaps with the resource fair; and
- providing substantive sessions on Sunday morning.

One consistent theme in the feedback is that the conference schedule is very full and thus hard to choose from among so many good sessions during each time period.

This “problem” is actually a result of having such a wealth of excellent proposals.

We foresee that once again we will have an abundance of excellent sessions we'll need to fit into a limited time. Our overarching goal is to maintain a high standard while making space in the program for as many different voices as possible. We will, of course, make every effort to make the conference easy to navigate and manage. This year we are exploring the possibility of a topic area index that will allow you to quickly find the page numbers of the types of sessions that interest you.

We are also hard at work on developing a special program for Sunday morning of the conference. The conference will conclude with two anchor sessions that cap our meeting based on the promise and challenges posed by this

year's theme. One anchor session addresses developments around diversity issues, while the other tackles institutional sustainability in a time where many of our offices face budget cutbacks. These show case workshops will be lively, interactive in nature, and will appeal to a broad range of POD membership. Plus, in response to your feedback, these sessions will be designed to help connect new POD attendees and more experienced POD members. We are aware of the value of everyone's time and have planned to end the conference so you'll easily make your afternoon travel connections. You won't want to miss the Sunday morning sessions!

We look forward to seeing you in Houston!

Conference co-chairs: Debra Fowler & Kevin Barry, Program co-chairs: Suzanne Tapp & Shaun Longstreet, Executive Director: Hoag Holmgren.



# Guest Column

Virginia S. Lee, President, POD Network in Higher Education

## Educational Development in Early 2009: A U.S. Perspective

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre*

*The falcon cannot bear the falconer;*

*Things fall apart; the center cannot hold...*

Sitting in the study of my home on Ward Street in Durham, North Carolina in the United States on February 10, 2009, the morning after President Obama's first publicized press conference during prime time, I am very aware of the uncertainty of the present moment. The first three lines of Yeats's *The Second Coming* remind me of larger, mysterious forces at work even now; the broken relationship between falcon and falconer, of a camel dressage event I attended during a short trip to Qatar in December; and "[t]hings fall apart", of books by Chinua Achebe and Pema Chodron bearing the same title. Even sitting here the context seems larger, if not coherent.

Global uncertainty and instability is extreme, and there is a worldwide economic crisis. Excesses inherent in capitalism as practiced in the United States and left unchecked in an era of deregulation with no accountability are arguably the root problem. Dazzling technical skill and virtuosity by Wall Street financiers exquisitely adapted to the expectations of the modern workplace brought extraordinary wealth to the already wealthy and extended hope of easy wealth

to the unwealthy. And we exported the problem to the rest of the world in designer credit instruments of mass destruction. Somewhere along the line, we lost our moral compass.

In her keynote address, "Leadership in an Era of Urgency," at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in Seattle, Washington this January, AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider called on the 1,300 educational leaders gathered there "to take the lead in shaping educational priorities worthy of a great democracy." Indeed. In keeping with one of AAC&U's major initiatives, *Making Excellence Inclusive*, Schneider encouraged us to merge two ongoing dialogues in U.S. higher education—sustaining American capability and enhancing underserved student success—in a compelling vision of higher education. (In the United States underserved students—often students from communities of color, often low income, often unprepared for university-level work—are the fastest growing segment of the college and university student population.) For all students, Schneider urged us to seek evidence that

they can apply essential learning outcomes to complex problems, and hold ourselves accountable to what we find.

Following the June 2008 ICED Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, I thought a lot about the development of human capacity and what we mean by it, its relationship to worldwide capacity building, and the role of higher education and educational development specifically in both processes. As I observed in a short article for the *HERDSA Journal*, frequently we cast worldwide capacity building in materialistic terms, harnessing it to a vision of universal prosperity inspired by the unsustainable standards of living of Western economies and their toxic patterns of consumption. Bound to that vision, the higher education agenda becomes little more than rarefied vocational training, focused on helping students acquire the skills and attitudes required to compete in an increasingly global economy and thereby secure national competitive advantage. Lost oftentimes is the classic vision of a liberal education and education as vehicle for social activism: the development of wide



understanding, reflective discernment, and a sense of identity and purpose towards a broader conception of human and social betterment.

My hope for the POD Network is that we can find more and more ways to support our members as they revitalize their institutions through a broader and clearer collective vision of human capacity. They revitalize faculty through renewed engagement with students and other faculty. And they revitalize the organizational structures and processes required to further our enlarged vision of human capacity within an ever wider and more diverse community.

## Reconnecting with Our Past

*The Oral History Project works to record the voices of POD leaders and establish a professional history that can inform our future leaders.*

LuAnn Wilkerson

*Edited by Dakin Burdick*



*LuAnn Wilkerson is currently Professor of Medicine and Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. She serves as the Director of the Center for Educational Development and Research, Chair of the Faculty Fellowship in Medical Education, and oversees the Instructional Design and Technology Unit in the School of Medicine. The first P.O.D. meeting she remembers attending was at the Airlie House in Jan. 2007.*

**Burdick:** Could you please describe your career path in professional, instructional and organizational development?

**Wilkerson:** Well, I started out in faculty development by being a graduate assistant in this Clinic to Improve University Teaching funded by the Kellogg Foundation and the project director was Dwight Allen, the Dean of Education at University of Massachusetts. Mary Deane Sorcinelli was another person in that project, as were Bette and Glenn Erickson. And really from the Ericksons I learned a lot about how to help university faculty in the individual consultative mode.

**Burdick:** What do you mean by that?

**Wilkerson:** The Clinic was trying to develop a model using a medical model. I'm not so sure it was a great choice, but

the idea was that you would collect a lot of data to make a diagnosis of teaching need. Then, based on that diagnosis you would individually negotiate a treatment plan with a faculty member. Once the "treatment" was implemented you would go back and evaluate again to see what improvement had occurred. So the data were things like videotaped observations and initial interview, student evaluations, faculty prediction of student evaluations, faculty self assessments, syllabus review, direct classroom observations and all of that got crunched in together and what would emerge would be this diagnostic conversation where the consultant and the faculty member would determine what kinds of things were needed to improve their teaching.

Prior to that time faculty development had been, "Go take a sabbatical." Slowly the idea was coming up that maybe people could learn going to workshops. And the Clinic was the third model of, "Well, maybe there is something more individualized that it takes to really change teaching behavior."

**Burdick:** Dwight Allen was famous for his work on micro-teaching at Stanford. What role did that play in the consultation model?

**Wilkerson:** One thing that he did is he really fo-

cused on micro skills; tiny little parts of the teaching learning process, like asking questions to provoke critical thinking

**Burdick:** Picking just a few small elements to correct?

**Wilkerson:** Right. The TABS had something like twenty-one discrete skills that were included and would form the basis of the prescription for what you would focus on in micro-teaching. That might be setting expectations or asking questions or responding to questions or encouraging participation or giving feedback. Whatever came out of the TABS were compared to the faculty's prediction of what the students were going to say. Where the discrepancy was the biggest was usually the place that we started.

**Burdick:** One of things that I've heard a number of times about the Clinic and its approach was that it tended to alienate the faculty who felt they're been "fixed." If that's true, when did that approach end?

**Wilkerson:** You know, I'm not sure that is totally accurate. I think it was a mistake to call it a clinic, to use the medical model. It made faculty think they were sick. But in my dissertation I studied forty faculty members in depth; case studies of their roles as teachers in a research institution. Some of them had participated in the clinic and some hadn't, and there

really wasn't the sense that it alienated them. As soon as the Kellogg funding was over, the name "Clinic" went away and Mary Deane just adopted the same kind of protocol under some other rubric. As far as I can tell from looking at P.O.D. publications, the one-on-one consultation is still the predominate model in faculty development.

**Burdick:** When did the Kellogg funding end?

**Wilkerson:** Shortly after I graduated. I graduated in 1977 and they were still in business. It was probably a five-year grant. It might have had another year after that.

**Burdick:** So what happened after graduate school?

**Wilkerson:** I was hired at Murray State University in Kentucky to build a center for the improvement of teaching. I did that for a few years and then I got pulled into medical education to direct faculty development for Ohio University Osteopathic School of Medicine in Athens. Sandy Cheldelin was in Medical Education and was a P.O.D. member. Sandy Engles might have been her name back then. When she was looking for someone to do faculty development, she persuaded me that Medicine was a very needy area that had done nothing

and she had just gotten a big grant from H.R.S.A., Health Resources and Services Administration. It was an H.R.S.A. grant to build a faculty development program, particularly for those clinicians teaching in their offices out around the state of Ohio.

From there I got hired at the medical college of Wisconsin to do faculty development and then the University of Chicago then Harvard. I stayed in Medicine setting up, directing, implementing, evaluating faculty development programs for physicians and the basic scientists who teach in medical schools.

**Burdick:** When did you move from Harvard to U.C.L.A.?

**Wilkerson:** In 1992 I was recruited as Assistant Dean or Associate Dean for Medical Education and I have been here ever since. Now I am a Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education, Professor of Medicine, because they don't know what to do with the fact that I don't have an M.D. They make me have my faculty appointment in the Department of Medicine, which is odd. They don't know what to do with me there either.

**Burdick:** How did that shape your practice? How did working with clinicians and observing clinical rounds change what you did?

**Wilkerson:** Well, the first thing I had to do was figure out what they were even saying because the language was so different and the environment was so different. I spent six months doing nothing but observing. I hung out in the emergency room, I went in to doctors' offices, I went into the hospitals with the teams.

**Burdick:** Did you have difficulty adjusting to the medical world? I know when I observed clinical rounds I got a bit queasy during a slide show on the medical use of maggots.

**Wilkerson:** Well, I actually did pass out once at bedside.

**Burdick:** How did it happen?

**Wilkerson:** The patient was so dreadfully ill -- totally emaciated -- and I just hadn't had breakfast and we were all standing around the bed and I went, "oh, oh someone better catch me!" I've adjusted since then, but oh my goodness! But during all that observation, I could see how what I knew about how learning occurs -- about learning theory, about teaching approaches -- how some of it applied and some of it didn't.

Then I had to set about trying to figure out how what I knew needed to be transformed for this new environment, and learn from the few people who had done faculty development in Medicine. I think the biggest difference is that there is a lot more one-on-one teaching. The small group issues are the same. The lecturing issues they were the same. The course planning was a little more involved because everything is done with multiple people. It is not just one faculty member and one syllabus and one class. So curriculum development was slightly more complex. Student learning, assessment of student learning; everything was pretty equivalent except that you needed to assess performance and actual hands-on abilities. So those were the two new areas that I needed to do some research, looking

more closely in the supervision literature in education because that's much more one-on-one teaching.

I still do lots of faculty development and use many of the same approaches and strategies except I'm much more cognitive than behavioral. We all started out with the kind of micro-teaching which is very behavioral, not wondering how people are thinking about the teaching and learning process. Now we are much more likely to work with more situated cognition and more social constructive approaches in thinking about how to help people think about improve their teaching.

**Burdick:** That's a great point. Who did you learn from in terms of how to do faculty development in Medical Science?

**Wilkerson:** Well, if you are talking about the classroom part it really that didn't take any translation. It's exactly the same as working with a biochemistry teacher or organic chemistry teacher. But a man named Hilliard Jason was one of the first M.D.-Ed.D. people and had started a lot of the work in faculty development. He started a national center for faculty development and I had the opportunity several years ago to interview him for an article in a series on Ph.D. educators and Medicine. I learned so much because I used his work but I certainly didn't know about him as a person or how he had gotten started or how faculty development started in Medicine.<sup>1</sup>

Just as an aside, it is very interesting to me that Michael Melnik was with Dwight Allen leading the Clinic to Improve University Teaching efforts. And Michael moved into

Medical Education at the University of Illinois. I think the model of diagnosis and treatment probably made so much sense to physicians that individual consultations was very easily integrated into teaching improvement programs because that's the way they work with patients.

**Burdick:** Intriguing. So what elements should the P.O.D. model retain in working with medical schools?

**Wilkerson:** Well, the most important thing in the P.O.D. model is that it is a multi-faceted approach to understanding the needs of the faculties. I think we worked really hard in the beginning because organizational development was almost nonexistent. Nobody could really figure out what that meant or the work going on in business with people like Tim Blanchard. And there were lots of people working in that area, but it wasn't really being applied in thinking about improving institutions or the life of faculty in those institutions. So it was very important to me to step back from Dwight Allen's kind of microcosm approach and take a macro view. To bring together the people who were thinking at that bigger level -- who were thinking about the process of change -- and the people who were thinking about the personal life of the faculty and learning. Improving the faculty members' work as a teacher wasn't sufficient. There was also their ability as scholars and their ability to get promoted and their own personal well-being. I think that was built into the founding of P.O.D. and has always stayed important.

**Burdick:** What do you see as being the most

important challenges facing professional, instructional and organizational development in the future?

**Wilkerson:** Well, I think it's the same challenge as the organizations in which we work thinking that staff development is something they need to invest in. Right here on this U.C.L.A. campus, there is not a faculty development program outside of Madison. There is an Office of Instructional Development and they do help train TAs and they do run once a year new faculty orientation. But that's it. I don't even have anything to do with them because we have nothing in common.

There's still plenty of large scale research oriented universities. Stanford just decided to open a faculty development program after having one of the most famous ones in Madison for the last twenty years. The teaching oriented colleges adopted from the very beginning; they realized that faculty would benefit from staff development. Community colleges have invested in staff development. But the large scale research universities are still dragging their feet in terms of recognizing and supporting teaching. Perhaps that's why, you know, this whole move to the teaching commons, and the push for



Dakin Burdick,  
Instructional Consultant,  
is POD's Historian.

scholarship of teaching and scholarly teaching. To speak the language of the larger research institutions.

**Burdick:** Do you feel that's a viable approach for marketing this sort of thing to the large research institutions?

**Wilkerson:** Probably. We had a big medical event,

attended by people from seventy different medical schools and had a chance to learn from the folks at Carnegie about the teaching commons. Pat Hutchings was a keynote speaker and I think people got all excited. It was a concept that made some sense. But once again that's in Madison where I think it's been much more likely that schools would invest in larger universities. So, I still don't know whether that's going to speak to places like U.C.L.A. and other large research oriented institutions.

<sup>1</sup>LuAnn Wilkerson & William A. Anderson, "Hilliard Jason, MD, EdD: A Medical Student turned Educator," *Advances in Health Science Education*, 9:4 (2004), pp. 325-335.



## Institute for New Faculty Developers

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

JUNE 21–26, 2009



Co-sponsored by **The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching & Learning** and the **POD Network**, the **2009 Institute for New Faculty Developers** is designed to help individuals develop their expertise in planning, leading, and managing college and university teaching and learning centers and faculty development programs.

Facilitated by experienced leaders in the field, the Institute serves full- and part-time program directors, administrators, and faculty developers. Learn how to apply key concepts and skills to meet the needs of your home institution through this weeklong program!

**To register for the June 21–26, 2009, Institute, or for more information, visit us on the web at [www.collab.org](http://www.collab.org), or contact The Collaboration at [collab@collab.org](mailto:collab@collab.org) or (651) 646-6166.**



# POD Essays on Teaching Excellence

*Toward the Best in the Academy Vol. 19, No. 3, 2007-2008*

*We continue featuring a selected POD Essay on Teaching Excellence in each issue of the POD Network News. The essay series is available by subscription, and reproduction is limited to subscribers.*

## Collaboration or Plagiarism? Explaining Collaborative-Based Assignments Clearly

*Tuesday Cooper, Empire State College*

Much has been written about the use of collaborative learning as a pedagogical tool to enhance student learning. Collaborative learning, or group work as it is commonly known, can be defined as a structured process where students are required to work in groups to complete a common task or assignment for a particular course. It has been identified as one of the most effective ways for students to become actively engaged in classroom activities (Davis, 1993; McKeachie, 1999; Nilson, 1998).

Although there are many positive aspects of group work, there are negatives as well. One particular problem occurs when students are confused about faculty expectations involving the work product of teams. More specifically, students often have difficulty determining how much of a group product, if any, is to be created by an individual. The intervention of faculty can play a key role in shaping student's perception of group work and other forms of collaborative learning opportunities.

In collaborative learning, students are authorized and required to work together. Generally, they must design the assignment topic, complete the research together, and jointly present their findings to the class as a whole. It logically follows that students who are working as a group ought to be required to submit their research in writing, and that this writing be a jointly written product.

When faculty assign "group work" it is plausible that students infer that

the group produces one product, that is, they work together as a team and submit one report. It follows that a bifurcated process of group research and individual presentation is more likely to be construed as a "study group", i.e., people study together and are evaluated separately (Davis, 1993). When students are given little or conflicting instruction, it is difficult for students to conclude which line of thinking is appropriate. Accordingly, the more instruction and detail faculty give to students, the more likely that there will be a "meeting of the minds" as to which type of assignment is expected and what procedures are to be followed.

When faculty want students working as groups to produce separate papers as the final product, it is imperative that they be given specific and detailed instructions as to the nature of the assignment. It should also be clear as to how the individual assignment differs from the work that is submitted as part of the group effort, if both types of assignments are required in a single course. The distinction between the two types of assignments is key for the students since it can make the difference between accurately completing an assignment and suffering the charge of plagiarism.

### **Plagiarism and What Falls Under the Guise of Collaboration?**

Faculty members can take several steps to clearly define research procedures that are authorized and those that are not.

*1. Don't make assumptions about what students know.* Although it can be assumed that today most college students have worked in groups in an academic setting, it cannot be assumed that students have had an experience with group work that was structured, positive, and meaningful. Accordingly, course materials should help students develop the skills that are required for success in the course.

For example, faculty should suggest structures for group processing of work and for managing their time. Also, faculty should make certain that students know what is expected in terms of the format and content of products that need to be produced. The more specific the instruction, the better the product (and the more likely it is that the assignment meets the instructor's expectations).

*2. Define individual vs. team accountability.* Faculty should give detailed instructions about the tasks that need to be performed and be clear about the fact that one person in the group should be responsible for each task, where appropriate. If students are intended to pursue research as a group but submit individual written projects, how topics for individuals get assigned becomes important. Can they or should they organize the distributions of topics on their own or with the intervention of the instructor? If such subdividing of larger topics is envisioned, vague paper assignments make the task very difficult for the student. "Conduct research in one area that we've discussed in class about which you would like to know

more. Write a 10-page paper on this topic." This example of an assignment is extremely general and leaves room for varied interpretation on the student's part.

Contrast the above with the following set of instructions: "Conduct research on the United States Supreme Court's ability to assist Bill Gates in circumventing the Antitrust Act. One student will be responsible for addressing the Sherman Act of 1890. Another should address the Clayton Act of 1914. The third person will be responsible for addressing the Antitrust Civil Process Act. Although students can conduct research as a team, each individual is expected to submit a separate and distinct paper." Providing instructions in this explicit manner gives the group a clear understanding of who is responsible for which part of the group assignment. The more specific and detailed the instruction, the less likely it is that students can submit the same assignment.

3. *Be clear with students about the purpose of the assignment.* Student learning increases when the instructor intentionally ties the assignment to the course objectives and is explicit with students about how the assignment meets the stated objectives. Articulating this also helps to clarify expectations. Once it is known that the intent of an assignment is, for example, "to demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast," it is easier for both the faculty member and student to consider whether this skill is clearly demonstrated in the assignment.

4. *Follow-up any discussion about assignment particulars in writing.* When clarifying assignments (group or otherwise) in class, make certain to put all explanations, clarifications, and revisions in writing so students can refer back to the discussions after leaving class. This type of follow-up allows both faculty and students to have a documented common understanding of what is required for a particular assignment.

### A Word About Technology and Explaining Assignments Clearly

Today, it is more likely than not that both groups and individuals will integrate the internet into research assignments. On such occasions, guidelines become important. In an effort to assist students in maintaining academic integrity, faculty should consider taking three easy steps.

#### 1. Give students detailed guidelines.

Students should be given a unique but specific format for research papers upon which they will be graded. While students are frequently instructed on the number of pages an assignment should be, it is just as useful to inform students about specific topics that need to be covered within a paper. For example, instructions that read, "All papers need to present five (5) distinct solutions for addressing the Bill Gates antitrust problem. Each solution should be supported by research garnered from at least two peer reviewed journals that can be found in both print and electronic medium." If students know that they will be graded based on the criteria, and the weight thereof, they are more likely than not to make sure to follow these specific instructions (which is not easy to do when using a paper that has already been created using different criteria).

2. *Focus on the process of writing a research paper.* Requiring students to complete assignments in parts is a helpful way of preventing students from submitting materials that are not of their own making (either from another member of the group or from the paper mill variety). Encourage students to submit annotated bibliographies, thesis statements, and detailed outlines in stages prior to the complete paper deadline (Rocklin, 1996). This allows faculty to give students feedback early in the process (and makes it more likely that students who are having difficulty with the project will be identified early on). In addition, it is less likely that a student will wait until the last minute

to find a research topic and complete the assignments - one of the leading reasons why students feel forced to plagiarize. (On student plagiarism, Nilson, 1998, chapter 9).

3. *Information Literacy.* Students need to know how to use the research that they find when doing an assignment. It is important to know whether students know how to evaluate, analyze, and cite information found. If a class is unfamiliar with skills related to information literacy, reserve a class meeting time specifically dedicated to "teaching" students these skills (e.g., direct students to sessions on information literacy offered by the institution's library staff.)

### Resources

*The Association of College and Research Libraries.* Retrieved December 29, 2007 from: [www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ACRL/Issues\\_and\\_Advocacy1/Information\\_Literacy1/Information\\_Literacy.htm](http://www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ACRL/Issues_and_Advocacy1/Information_Literacy1/Information_Literacy.htm)

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