POD Network News, Winter 2011

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LOOKING FORWARD

In November, during the presidential address at POD’s 35th annual conference, I used the image of a drinking glass to explore the current environment in higher education and in POD. Is the glass, metaphorically, half-full or half-empty? I asked the 500+ members who attended the session to discuss a few questions, and then to write or tweet notes to me. This column blends some of my comments from St. Louis with ideas contributed by conference attendees.

The glass-half-empty perspective is pervasive in the media and in conversations on many campuses, despite the immense privilege we enjoy in our work and lives. A Chronicle of Higher Education article in September, for example, began: “The ideal of American public higher education may have entered a death spiral.” In October, an Inside Higher Education author wrote: “To begin an article by saying that American higher education is in a state of crisis would be … so familiar as to border on tautology.” The real question, this article went on, is which of our many afflictions is the gravest threat – is it budget cuts, or the “adjunctification” of higher education, or a consumer culture that values student satisfaction more than learning, or something else? The consensus is clear, even if the metaphor varies. We’ve reached a tipping point. We’re looking into the abyss. The glass is half-empty, at best.

Yet, from another perspective, that glass is half-full. Budgets are squeezed, but our work is thriving. Facing scarce resources, many institutions are focusing on core missions of teaching and learning. John Kotter’s influential book Leading Change (1996) argues that the first step for organizational transformation is to establish a sense of urgency. Every campus, it seems, now has that.

The reality has set in that financially and professionally we no longer can afford to waste resources on ineffective teaching, poorly designed courses and curricula, practices that assume homogeneity rather than build on diversity, and inept academic leadership. In this context, as Pat Hutchings argued a few years ago in a POD plenary, our centers are becoming more central.

After laying out these contrasting perspectives in my talk, I prompted conference participants to think about their own work. On your campus, I asked, is your glass half-empty or half-full? To my surprise, roughly 90% of participants chose the positive choice. Some of that might reflect the poll’s context – following a dinner and conversation with colleagues, who isn’t smiling? Much of that optimism, however, reflects real hope and progress POD conference-goers are experiencing in their work. We are contributing to deep student learning, to

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Notes from the POD Office

Jossey-Bass/Wiley will be offering a 25% discount to POD members on ALL books, provided the books are purchased for individual use (bulk or course orders do not apply). We’ll send the details soon to all members via the Member List and also post this on the POD website.

The planning for the 2011 POD | HBCU joint conference, October 26-30, in Atlanta, is well under way. The conference theme is “Create, Collaborate, Engage.” In the spirit of this theme, please consider collaborating with an HBCU member or members in submitting a joint proposal. All collaborative details will be found in the Call for Proposals (available by early February). This will surely be a memorable, rejuvenating, and illuminating conference. Be sure to attend!

Remember that all of POD’s Essays on Teaching Excellence (Elizabeth O’Connor Chandler, editor) are now available online, free of charge, including Volume 21, the newest series: Facilitating Group Discussions: Understanding Group Development and Dynamics, Kathy Takayama, Brown University; Transparent Alignment and Integrated Course Design, David W. Concepción, Ball State University; Multiple-Choice Questions You Wouldn’t Put on a Test: Promoting Deep Learning Using Clickers, Derek Bruff, Vanderbilt University; Engaging Students, Assessing Learning—Just a Click Away, Linda C. Hodges, Loyola University Maryland; Research-Based Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity, Michele DiPietro, Kennesaw State University; Using Undergraduate Students as Teaching Assistants, Joseph “Mick” La Lopa, Purdue University; The Value of the

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engaged teaching, and to meaningful organizational change. No wonder people are optimistic.

After reflecting on our individual contexts, I asked the group to broaden our view (from one glass to many) to consider the entire POD Network. When we look at us together, what do we see? Networks, of course, can do things that individuals alone cannot. My favorite example of this involves the Density Hales-Jewett Theorem. In January 2009, a renowned math professor at Cambridge University posted this stubborn theorem to his blog and asked his readers to prove it. Dozens of contributors from around the world, including well-known mathematicians and high school teachers, worked together for six weeks before solving the problem, and the “Polymath Project” then published its results in Science. What made the Polymath Project strong was not so much the power of the individual nodes in the network, but rather what happens in the space between those nodes. The connections are the key to any network’s power. For human networks, like POD, technology sometimes helps us make and maintain those connections, yet the heart of the connection is the relationship between people.

But networks not only connect, they also do certain work — they collaboratively prove a math theorem or construct an encyclopedia or connect friends. That work was the focus of my second question to the assembly. I asked people to discuss and then tweet (or write) to me 3 or 4 words that capture the most important work that the POD Network should do over the next several years. What do we, as individuals and as a network, want and need from POD?

People submitted a flood of ideas, clustering into trends about the mission and roles of POD. Many suggest further deepening our professional expertise in innovative pedagogies, teaching with technology, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, assessment, diversity, and organizational development. Members want POD to refine and share evidence-based best practices in these areas. Members also want POD to act as an advocate for and supporter of our common work and of learning-centered reform in higher education.

Using technologies and face-to-face events, POD should foster meaningful connections between members, and between POD people and our peers throughout the world. However, that session was only the beginning of POD’s renewed strategic planning process. As our Core Committee develops a plan for our network’s future, we will rely on the diversity of and connections between our members to keep us vital. And, as our members in St. Louis reminded us all, there’s plenty of reason to be optimistic about the future. POD’s glass is much more than half-full.

--Peter Felten, President, POD
Conference Wrap-Up

The St Louis conference team thanks all of the presenters and attendees who made the 2010 conference the great experience that it was. The conference was attended by 706 people from all around the world, making this the highest attendance in the last three years. Jake Jacobson, conference photographer, took amazing photos that can be viewed at http://tiny.cc/q8o5f.

The success of every POD Network gathering depends on the hard work of the many volunteers behind the scenes. We are extremely grateful for all of their help and for the steady hand of POD’s Executive Director, Hoag Holmgren. The conference team would also like to acknowledge the leadership of current POD President, Peter Felten, as well as the members of the POD Core Committee, whose support and advice have been invaluable.

With the close of the St Louis meeting, Suzanne Tapp and Shaun Longstreet hand over the conference team leadership to Martin Springboard and Michael Palmer. Martin and Michael are working with a new conference team and with representatives from the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Faculty Development Network for a joint POD/HBCU conference in 2011.

Core Committee Elected

Congratulations to these new Core Committee members.

Eli Collins-Brown
Methodist College of Nursing

Shaun Longstreet
University of Texas at Dallas

Harriette Richard
Johnson C. Smith University

Suzanne Tapp
Texas Tech University

Jim Therrell
Central Michigan University

Michele DiPietro
POD’s next President Elect

DiPietro was elected by the Core Committee at its meeting in October. He is the Executive Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and an Associate Professor in Mathematics and Statistics at Kennesaw State University.

2010 Innovation Award

Jim Therrell (Central Michigan University) is the recipient of the 2010 POD Innovation Award. Therrell’s submission, the “One-Hour Conference (and Web Conference),” is a time-compressed special event held 3 times/semester on 2 consecutive days (to meet diverse faculty schedules), where faculty receive lunch, a 5-minute keynote, their choice of 2-3 breakout sessions, follow-up resources and next steps, followed days later by a webinar of the same content, “The Less than an Hour Web Conference,” which is recorded and posted on iTunes U.

Innovation Idea Awards are presented each year at the POD conference to honor faculty developers who have implemented creative ideas for the enhancement of teaching and learning and/or faculty development.

--Todd Zakrajsek, Innovation Committee Chair

2010 Spirit of POD Award Winners

Wayne Jacobson (University of Iowa) and Lynn Sorenson (Brigham Young University) are the recipients of the 2010 Bob Pierleoni Spirit of POD Service Award. This award recognizes members who have made selfless contributions through their long-time professional service to the organization and the field.

2010 Robert J Menges Awards

Elizabeth Evans (Concordia University Wisconsin); and Christy Crutsinger (University of North Texas), Kiernan Mathews, Brendan Russell, and Cathy Trower (Harvard University) are the recipients of the 2010 Robert J. Menges Award. This award was established in memory of Bob Menges an honored scholar and a consummate mentor. The award recognizes original research -- quantitative or qualitative -- that leads to systematic investigation and evidence-based conclusions. Evans’ study, titled “Engaging Faculty in Outcomes Assessment,” examined the conditions (behaviors, attitudes, structures, leadership) that enable faculty engagement in assessment and those that hinder faculty involvement.

Crutsinger, Mathews, Russell, and Trower’s study, “Multi-institutional Perspectives on Senior Faculty Engagement and Vitality,” increased our current understanding of what institutions, divisions, departments and individuals can do to help faculty maintain satisfying and vital careers. Their initial research involved collaboration among six public colleges and universities. The project has expanded to include over 100 institutions.

--Mary-Ann Winkelmes, Menges Committee Chair
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.

Michael Melnick

Edited by Dakin Burdick

Dr. Melnik is focused on the creation, development, and marketing of new products and companies. Applying knowledge as an education professor at the University of Massachusetts earlier in his career of how people learn more efficiently and enjoyably, has helped him bring a valuable perspective to the creation and design of new products for the industrial and consumer marketplace both in the United States and internationally.

Dr. Melnik's Ed.D. dissertation established the model for the Clinic to Improve University Teaching, which in turn provided the model for faculty development in POD. This excerpt is from an interview on February 2, 2010.

Burdick: Why don't we start by talking about the Clinic and your dissertation, "The Development and Analysis of a Clinic to Improve University Teaching" (1972)?

Melnik: Thank you for your interest. What would you like to know?

Burdick: Everything. You were working with Dwight Allen, right?

Melnik: Yes. The exact way the actual Clinic Program started was as follows. Dwight Allen had created Microteaching when he was a professor at Stanford University. The idea basically was that a teacher through Microteaching would master various teaching skills by repeated practice with focused feedback. One day I asked Dwight a very simple question, "How do you know which skills to work on when a teacher starts using Microteaching?" It seemed logical to assume that some teachers obviously would have certain skills and others would not. A good friend with whom I grew up was a student at Harvard Medical School at the time, and so I thought about the possibility of using a clinic model to collect information, make decisions based on it, and then determine teaching improvement strategies for faculty development.

After a year of intensive development work, Dwight invited two departments to test the Clinic process. One was the English department and the other was the Computer Science department. As part of my doctoral program, I was the first person to serve as a Teaching Improvement Specialist for a total of 24 faculty members who went through this process from both of these departments. That successful test eventually led to my dissertation and support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which then provided the largest grant of $590,000 ever awarded at that time for faculty development in higher education to develop it for three years at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst from 1972 to 1975. Then in 1975, this was followed by an additional two year grant of $250,000 to institutionalize it and make it available to other interested universities and colleges in this country and internationally.

In summary, I believe we were the first to develop a clinic process with a series of specific steps to improve teaching using a trained consultant (sometimes a graduate doctoral student) that offered faculty the chance to confidentially examine multiple data sources which focused on specific teaching skills and try many different improvement strategies one of which was Microteaching. And by providing material, offering training workshops, and making a film about this process, we made it available to all other institutions who might wish to implement it. We also tried to better establish and advance the field of faculty development by offering the first International Conference on Improving Teaching in 1974 co-sponsored with U.N.E.S.C.O. when over 450 participants from 35 countries attended for four days at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

So that is essentially the framework of how it started. It was successful because of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the contributions of many people including Dwight Allen, Glenn Erickson, Bette Erickson, George Bryniawsky, Paul Adams, Daniel Sheehan, Chris Daggett, Michael Jackson, Luann Wilkerson, and Mary Deane Sorcinelli.

Burdick: How did you identify those twenty skills and behaviors?

Melnik: That's a very good question because no one had developed such a set of teaching skills and behaviors for higher education faculty. Initially many of the skills were adapted from Microteaching, but it was a collaborative effort among many different faculty members that produced the final twenty.

An important part of the Clinic process was its confidential basis. Teaching at that time was becoming a more important factor for tenure, promotion, and merit pay increases. Faculty members prior to this had always been in a position that whenever they were reviewed regarding their teaching,
After the TABS was analyzed, the Teaching Improvement Specialist would prepare a review for the faculty member. The faculty would then sit down together and determine which strategies to work on in order to help improve teaching. They would then have a concluding interview. Often this was the first time they were able to openly discuss specific concerns and questions about their teaching. And often, it was amazing what faculty members talked about once they knew they were not going to be penalized in any way for doing so.

**Burdick:** Okay, let's break that down a bit. Was the videotape sample of teaching viewed together with the faculty member and if so, what were some of the issues that were encountered?

**Melnik:** Well, video tape was fairly new at the time. At Stanford they used these big two inch Ampex systems and we also had one of these huge videotape machines before we were able to get more portable units which could more easily be carried to different classrooms. In general when anybody saw themselves teaching on videotape for the first time, they were more focused initially on how they looked on tape and this was called "the cosmetic effect". They would look at themselves and it didn't matter what you were saying to the person. They were busy with questions like, "Am I that bald? Am I that fat? Am I that this? Or am I that that? Is that how I talk? Is that my voice level?" So once this cosmetic effect, which I think is just human nature was over, then the Teaching Improvement Specialist could actually begin the process.

**Burdick:** The other thing that I noticed is that there was a faculty self-assessment and prediction of the TABS results.

**Melnik:** You are really on top of it. That is correct.

**Burdick:** Well, thank you. How did that work? I haven't seen it used elsewhere.

**Melnik:** When you have cognitive dissonance you create a desire to find out why this cognitive dissonance exists and therefore motivate people in essence to find out why. If you ask a faculty member to predict how they thought students would respond regarding a particular skill, and then they found that the students responded differently, they generally wanted to know why that was the case.

As I look back reflectively, I'd say that if I had to do it all over again, I would focus a lot more on defining a set of universal principles and ways in general that teachers can contribute to the welfare of students in a much broader sense, rather than just the transmission of knowledge. And this is what I would suggest should be a large part of the future of faculty development. After all, if the role of a teacher is mainly defined as efficiently transferring knowledge, the internet can now instantly provide free access to almost any information which we seek!

**Burdick:** That's a great point. Well, I just have one more question and that is really about dates more than anything else. There was the second grant in '75 and '77. Were you involved with that second iteration of the grant?

**Melnik:** Yes. I stayed at Umass from ‘72 to ‘77.

**Burdick:** Then what happened? Was that institutionalized at that point?

**Melnik:** Yes it was, but like any program it needs to be continually nurtured and supported at any institution in order to grow. After the Clinic Grant ended in 1977 and I as well as everyone else in the program moved on, I was no longer involved. We tried to make a contribution to the field of faculty development over the five years of our Kellogg Grant from 1972 to 1977 and hope we had some success.

**Burdick:** I think the program was a huge success. You now have over 2,000 people doing that same process all across the country. It’s the basis for most of the faculty development in the country at this point. And our national model of faculty development is also leading the development in other countries, so there are now a variety of smaller organizations that are starting up in Japan and Croatia and other nations that are bringing people in from this national organization to help inform their process. So that process is continuing to grow.

**Melnik:** That is a great thing to know because I think good teachers are so important at all levels and need more support. But speaking of other countries, we held the first International Conference on Improving University Teaching in 1974.

**Burdick:** And where was that?

**Melnik:** That was at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. We called it the first International Conference on Improving University Teaching.

**Burdick:** You know, that's the first I’ve ever heard of it.

**Melnik:** During the first two years of our program, I had talked with several universities and colleges in other countries about the Clinic Process and thought we should start this conference. Dwight Allen had a done a lot of work with U.N.E.S.C.O in Paris and helped interest them in co-sponsoring it with us. One of the other people who made it a success was a doctoral graduate student named Gordon Schimmel who was in charge of managing the conference and he did a really great job. We invited in a number of different speakers from the US and around the world to talk about their programs to improve university teaching and Bill Cosby was one of these speakers!

**Burdick:** Now how did that work?

**Melnik:** Well, Bill Cosby at that time was a doctoral student at the School of Education. He was asked if he would be the keynote speaker for our conference and he said yes.

**Burdick:** That must have
Globalization has become an obsession in higher education. Across the planet, professional associations like STLHE, HERDSA, ISSOTL, and POD will host 2011 conferences exploring boundary-crossing in a rapidly diversifying academy; HERDSA’s conference theme, for example, emphasizes the ‘seismic’ shifts and ‘tectonic’ transformations occurring in the sector, both in Australia and internationally.” Many seem to agree with Thomas Friedman’s 2005 contention that the world is flat.

My past year as the POD Network’s president has me wondering whether Friedman’s thesis actually holds for teaching, learning and academic development. In other words, do we have a level playing field that allows innovators from anywhere to influence practice everywhere? Additionally, as a historian, I harbor a certain skepticism toward claims about the progressive nature of change over time. So, even if we could have one, would we want a flat world in teaching, learning and academic development?

Some evidence supports Friedman’s thesis in our context. Technology makes it simple for our ideas to cross oceans. Most of us can access the world’s academic literature from our computers. As the literature spreads, we do too. POD’s 2010 conference, for instance, attracted participants from every continent except Antarctica, including more than 30 from Japan alone. New professional organizations also are flattening our academic world. The International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) and the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) are relatively young associations (founded in 1993 and 2004) that bring together scholars in their fields from across the globe. With their conferences and journals, both contribute to an environment that allows innovation in teaching and academic development to spread rapidly.

In published scholarship, however, the boundaries in our fields seem to be less permeable – at least in the United States, where we habitually read work by our national colleagues. This fall I conducted an informal research project comparing citations from a recent volume of POD’s annual To Improve the Academy (#28, 2010) with a similar sample from ICED’s International Journal for Academic Development (3 issues, September 2008 - June 2009). Over that period of time, TIA and IJAD each published 21 articles, representing some the best academic development scholarship in the world. All 48 of the authors of the TIA articles reported being at North American institutions, while only 8 of 52 IJAD authors were. The works cited in these articles echoed the authors’ institutional affiliations. Of the nearly 250 books cited in TIA, some 94% were published in the United States, while 39% of the books referenced in IJAD were published in the U.S. Journal citations followed a similar pattern. More than 400 journals were referenced in the TIA and IJAD articles that I examined, yet only 25% of those journals were cited at least once in both TIA and IJAD. Although some variation should be expected, the lack of overlap is striking. Around the world, academic developers are doing similar work but reading and producing different scholarly literature. I suspect that I would find comparable results if I expanded my sample to include HERDSA’s Higher Education Research & Development, or if I explored volumes focused more directly on the scholarship of teaching and learning, such as STLHE’s The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Our scholarly world, it seems, is not flat. We tend to read, cite, and write with colleagues from our own neighborhoods, particularly those of us in the United States. Effective innovation in teaching, learning and academic development anywhere may not be influencing practice everywhere. Friedman’s thesis, it seems, does not describe our professional world.

That might be unfortunate but it is not particularly surprising. Academics are busy – Continued on page 7
people, furiously juggling multiple obligations. Staying current in the global literature on teaching, learning and academic development might be too much to expect. Additionally, most of us will not, and probably should not, transform our teaching practices as new research emerges. Instead, pedagogical change tends to be contextual and evolutionary. Effective teachers and developers often make small intentional changes, and then assess the learning that results from those changes, before committing to further action.

Taking this deliberate approach to our work, however, is not the same as adopting a parochial view that local practices are good enough. Anna Carew and her colleagues argue in a 2008 IJAD article (13:1) that we should aim for “elastic practice” — the capacity to tailor our local work to reflect both a deep knowledge of our own context and an adaptive view of our profession’s best practices.

If we can be elastic, then globalization doesn’t need to flatten us. Instead, we can attend to our own contexts while we learn from and contribute to our increasingly global profession.

What’s Up With WikiPODia?

WikiPODia, the PODnetwork wiki, is growing. If you haven’t visited the wiki, go to https://sites.google.com/site/podnetwork/ and explore!

WikiPODia has over 260 registered contributors, 37 general topics, 18 presentations from the 2009 conference and 41 presentations from the 2010 conference. Presenters are encouraged to upload their presentations at any time, there is no expiration date.

The goal of WikiPODia is to work in partnership with the listserv, acting as a repository for the wonderful gems of information that fly across the listserv, gathering them in one place where many can contribute to the topic, share resources, attachments, and link to published work.

WikiPODia is overseen and managed by the Electronic Communication and Resources Committee (ECRC). Currently the coordinators are David Sacks, Amy Collier, and Eli Collins-Brown, but the work is accomplished by a small group of dedicated, passionate PODers. To see who is in this amazing group, click on the Working Group members link on WikiPODia. The ECRC is always looking for new members! Please contact Eli Collins-Brown, ECRC Chair (ecollins-brown@mcon.edu), David Sacks, ECRC Chair-Elect (dsack2@uky.edu), Kathryn Plank, ECRC Past Chair (plank.28@osu.edu), or anyone on the committee.

You can be on WikiPODia too. If you have posted or contributed to an inquiry on the listserv, take a few minutes to post the compiled results to WikiPODia and share with the POD community! If you have an idea for a topic you have done some research on, share it on WikiPODia and invite others to share their resources as well.

Contributing to WikiPODia

WikiPODia can be found by going to the following URLs: https://sites.google.com/site/podnetwork/; http://bit.ly/wikipodia; and http://tinyurl.com/wikipodia.

WikiPODia is viewable by the world, but only editable by POD members. So anyone can see what’s on the wiki. To contribute:

• Click on the link to the Contributors form and fill out the form
• You will receive an email within a few days from one of the WikiPODia coordinators notifying you that you have access to edit WikiPODia
• Go through the tutorials to learn how to create and edit pages, located under Ground Rules and Guidelines

• Add your content.
• Post a link to your content on the listserv!

--Eli Collins-Brown, ECRC Chair and WikiPODia Co-coordinator

Members on the Move

In June 2009, Eric Kristensen moved to Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada) and began a contract at the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine working on a curriculum renewal project for the MD program. In October 2010, Eric accepted a position as Director of Capilano University’s new Teaching and Learning Centre in North Vancouver, British Columbia.

Call for Papers

Studies in Graduate and Professional Student Development, published by New Forums Press, is soliciting articles for upcoming volumes of the journal.

Please see guidelines for submissions on the website at http://tiny.cc/qqify.
Biology Scholars Program Initiative

A $600,000 award from the National Science Foundation has been made to the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) to expand the Biology Scholars Program, a national leadership initiative for college faculty to improve undergraduate biology education based on evidence of student learning. In just two years, the Biology Scholars Program has brought together more than 60 biologists to engage in and advance the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in biology. Support from the National Science Foundation advances the program’s residencies in classroom assessment, science education research, and scholarly publishing. Support additionally empowers Scholars to become SoTL mentors and leaders in professional societies. Applications for the 2011 Assessment, Research, and Transitions Residencies will be accepted until February 15, March 1, and February 1, respectively. For more information, visit www.biology Scholars.org.

Publications


SAVE THE DATES

International Institute for New Faculty Developers

June 18-22, 2011
Kennesaw State University, located in the Atlanta metropolitan area

Early Bird Deadline: April 29, 2011

For further information see the IINFD website at http://www.kennesaw.edu/cetl/iinfd/ or questions contact CETL directly at cetl@kennesaw.edu or (770) 423-6410.

Sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Kennesaw State University and the POD Network.

POD 36th Annual Conference

“Create, Collaborate, Engage”


Be sure to look for the Call for Proposals in February.

HERDSA 2011

July 4-7
Gold’s Coast
Queensland

Dakin Burdick (Endicott College) is POD’s Historian.


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Publications


Biology Scholars Program Initiative – Reconnecting Our Past, Continued from page 5

been fantastic.

Melnik: Well, it sure made an education conference much more fun for a lot of people. We were going to do a second one, but the focus of our second grant was on institutionalizing the Clinic process at UMass and this is what we did. However, it’s one of my great regrets that we didn’t continue that as a regular part of faculty development. I think there should be an international conference every year on faculty development.

Burdick: Well, there is now one every other year. The International Consortium on Educational Development runs one and it’s in Barcelona this year, and then every other year, all of the presidents of the various faculty development organizations get together and they visit a country in which they want to promote faculty development. I think it was Croatia a couple of years ago.

Melnik: Well, that’s great to know that it continued beyond the first one we did in 1974. There was a lot of excitement and it was a great time to be at the School of Education at University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Burdick: Sounds like it! Thank you so much for talking with me.

Dakin Burdick (Endicott College) is POD’s Historian.
Zubizarreta Selected as 2010 U.S. Professor of the Year

John Zubizarreta was selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education as the 2010 U.S. Professor of the Year for Baccalaureate Colleges. The U.S. Professors of the Year program salutes four outstanding undergraduate instructors in four institutional categories—those who excel as teacher-scholars and who influence the lives and careers of their students. Selection criteria also cite the winner’s scholarly approach to teaching and learning, contribution to undergraduate education in the institution, community and profession; and support from colleagues and current and former undergraduate students. It is recognized as the most prestigious national award honoring undergraduate teaching. The ceremonies were held on November 18, 2010 in Washington, D.C.

POD Representation in Japan

The focus of the symposium held at Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan was to learn from the international associations on Faculty Development in other countries, specifically looking at the preparation of future faculty and programs focusing on developing our future faculty (graduate students). Each country representative presented an overview of the types of PFF programs offered and the current issues that these programs were facing. This fantastic event brought together many like-minded individuals interested in the future development of PFF programs around the world. Many thanks to CORE for allowing me to represent POD at this very important meeting.

--Dieter Schönwetter, University of Manitoba

UMass Amherst Awarded $400,000 Mellon Grant Renewal To Promote Mutual Mentoring Networks for Faculty

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded the University of Massachusetts Amherst a three-year, $400,000 renewal grant (2010-2013) to continue its successful Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative for early-career and under-represented faculty. With the Foundation’s support, the campus launched an ambitious pilot mentoring program in 2006, followed by a three-year, $400,000 campus-wide initiative in 2007.

Led by Mary Deane Sorensen, Associate Provost for Faculty Development, Jung H. Yun, Director of New Faculty Initiatives, and Brian Baldi, Senior Project Manager, the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative promotes the use of non-hierarchical mentoring networks that draw upon the experiences and expertise of a wide variety of mentoring partners, including peers, near-peers, senior faculty, and administrators, both on- and off-campus. The centerpiece of the initiative—the Mutual Mentoring Team Grant Program and the Micro Grant Program—supports faculty working in large or small groups to design their own context-sensitive mentoring networks at the departmental, school/college, inter-disciplinary, or inter-institutional levels.

Interest in the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative, including program design, implementation, and data collection, has been substantial. “My co-PIs and I have been invited to disseminate our model and practices at over 25 conferences, universities, and colleges in the U.S., as well as China, Canada, Egypt and Ireland,” notes Sorensen. “We are also delighted that four U.S. universities have adapted our work and implemented Mutual Mentoring grant programs on their own campuses.”

For more information about the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative, please visit: http://www.umass.edu/ofd/mentoring/pguide.html.
Classroom response systems ("clickers") can turn multiple-choice questions—often seen to be as limited as assessment tools—into effective tools for engaging students during class. When using this technology, an instructor first poses a multiple-choice question. Each student responds using a handheld transmitter (or "clicker"). Software on the classroom computer displays the distribution of student responses. Although many multiple-choice questions found on exams work well as clicker questions, there are several kinds of multiple-choice questions less appropriate for exams that function very well to promote learning, particularly deep learning, during class when used with clickers.

One-Best-Answer Questions
Consider posing a question that requires students to weigh evidence for and against each of several answer choices—a question that asks students to select the one “best” answer among competing alternatives. In a literature class, students might be asked to select the option that best explains a character’s motivation in a particular scene from a play. In a nursing class, students might be asked if they have a close friend or family member with a particular medical condition, and a biology instructor might ask students about their personal experiences with abstract course material with their own lives. These kinds of questions can help students connect sometimes-abstract course material with their own lives. They can also help students understand each other better. Students are sometimes surprised to see how many of their peers agree or disagree with them on particular topics. This can empower some students to speak up in class discussions, knowing that there are others present who agree with them. It can also encourage some students to more seriously consider perspectives different from their own.

Student Perspective Questions
Student perspective questions can be useful clicker questions, as well. These questions ask students to share their opinions and personal experiences. For example, a political science instructor might ask students about their views on current events, a psychology instructor might ask students if they have a close friend or family member with a particular medical condition, and a biology instructor might ask students about their personal views on evolution. These kinds of questions can help students connect sometimes-abstract course material with their own lives. They can also help students understand each other better. Students are sometimes surprised to see how many of their peers agree or disagree with them on particular topics. This can empower some students to speak up in class discussions, knowing that there are others present who agree with them. It can also encourage some students to more seriously consider perspectives different from their own.

When asking student perspective questions, the ability of clickers to allow students to respond anonymously about sensitive topics is important. Simply asking for a show of hands would likely result in misleading results to questions like these. Moreover, the perspectives of all students are displayed to the class, not just those of the relatively few students willing to share their perspectives verbally. An instructor could poll his or her students on their opinions and experiences using online surveys and the like, but doing so via clickers provides an immediacy to the data thus generated that can engage more students.

Misconception Questions
Many instructors in the sciences use clickers to ask misconception questions, multiple-choice questions designed to surface and address common student misconceptions about particular topics. For example, a chemistry instructor might show students two identical flasks with different amounts of water inside and ask which flask, if any, has the highest vapor pressure. Students are likely to vote that the flask with more water has the higher vapor pressure. However, since vapor pressure depends on temperature, not volume, the correct answer is that the vapor pressure is the same for both flasks. This question is designed to address a common misconception about the relationships among the three variables vapor pressure, volume, and temperature.

Well-designed misconception questions are answered incorrectly by 30 to 70 percent of students. Many instructors who see this kind of result engage in what Harvard University physics professor Eric Mazur calls peer instruction (Mazur, 1997). Students are asked to discuss the question in pairs, sharing their reasons for their answers.
with each other and attempting to come to consensus on the correct answer. Then the students vote again on the clicker question. This pair discussion time is valuable because it gives students a chance to learn from each other. Often, a peer’s explanation of a tough question can be more helpful to a student than an instructor’s explanation. After the second vote, the instructor then leads a classwide discussion of the question, guiding that discussion to focus on reasons for and against the various answer choices. Misconception questions work well on exams, of course. However, the expectation (or, at least, hope) is that many students will answer these questions correctly on an exam. When used during class with clickers, the expectation is that many students will answer them incorrectly, creating an opportunity for students to stretch their mental models. Mazur and his collaborators have assessed this teaching method using pre- and post-tests and have found significant evidence that it improves student conceptual understanding (Crouch & Mazur, 2001). Their results have been replicated in a variety of science courses and institutions (Fagen, Crouch, & Mazur, 2002).

Peer Assessment Questions

Many instructors have students assess each other’s work. Unfortunately, students can often be hesitant to publicly critique each other, which means that when, for instance, an instructor invites a class to give feedback on a student presentation, the resulting discussion often does not involve the kind of critical analysis and constructive criticism the instructor would like to see. Having students assess each other’s work using clicker questions, however, allows them more easily to surface the more critical opinions of their peers’ work.

For example, in her history courses at Mount Royal University, Kori Street has her students evaluate each other’s class presentations using clicker questions (Bruff, 2009). Her students assign a letter grade assessing the quality of a student’s sources, the strength of the student’s arguments, or the clarity of the student’s presentation. She finds that by having students assess each other’s work in these categories using clickers, her students are more able to provide honest, constructive feedback since the clickers provide a degree of anonymity. The display of results of these clicker questions, in turn, promotes more engaged class discussion. When students find out, for instance, that 40 percent of them feel that the student’s sources were not very strong, it becomes safer for the whole class to discuss the quality of those sources. Since Street’s clicker questions are tied to her grading rubric, the discussions they generate serve to teach students about the standards of her discipline.

**Why Clickers?**

Why use clickers to ask the kinds of questions described above? Clickers allow students to respond anonymously, making it safer for students to share their perspectives and take risks since their peers are not aware of their individual responses. However, instructors can track student responses using clickers, creating accountability for participation during class, which in turn increases participation. When more students can respond to a question honestly, more students are prepared to engage in subsequent discussion. The display of results, that classroom response systems makes possible, provides further motivation for meaningful discussion as students become aware of divergent views. This blend of advantages is difficult to achieve with other in-class response mechanisms.

It should be noted that clicker questions can only set the stage for deep learning. It is during the independent thought, small-group discussion, and classwide debates that deep learning actually occurs. Well-designed clicker questions, however, can be effective tools for motivating and preparing more students to engage in those useful activities.

**References**


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