

Who is Ann Ferren?

By John Anderson
Senior Consultant, Faculty Corner

For the last few years CTE has been the host of the Ann Ferren Teaching Conference. At the 2007 AFTC, workshops will support a theme and address pedagogical practices, and lunch and desserts will be served amid an atmosphere of collegiality. As conversations at the conference span the spectrum between holiday leisure and the integration of technology in the classroom, perhaps only a few bold parvenus will ask senior faculty two questions: who is Ann Ferren and why is this conference named after her?

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Patrick Allitt spoke with faculty last September about "Surviving and Thriving in Teaching."
See article on page 3.

Winning the Battle for Brainpower

Letter from the Director

In CTE, we believe there is no more effective way to serve AU than by supporting faculty in doing their work. How to anticipate faculty needs, give them top priority, and fulfill them proactively—day in and day out—is our challenge. Responding to this challenge takes many forms. Typical is the professional "concierge service" provided by CTE's Faculty Corner staff. Our advanced research and multimedia lab staffs work closely with faculty to offer in-class workshops and to consult



on a broad spectrum of technology and pedagogy applications. Teaching and Learning Resources staff members collaborate in designing and managing workshops that reach hundreds of full-time and adjunct faculty colleagues. AV staff members typically fulfill more than 3,000 requests for in-class support in a given month and assist in the production of 350 or more special events. What is distinctive about CTE is that most "staff members" carrying out key roles are part-time student workers, primarily graduate students. In many instances they are more qualified than entry-level full-time staff members whom AU could hire. In the Faculty Corner, you are likely to be served by John Anderson, MFA, an Adjunct Pro-

fessor at the Corcoran Gallery of Art and in SOC. John has deep information technology skills, gallery management experience and several independent shows to his credit. In the Social Science Research Lab you might work with Ph.D. candidate Usman Quadir, formerly a staff economist at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics. Coaching you on Blackboard in our Teaching and Learning Resources office (or in your office) might be Microsoft Certified consultant Melissa Klink. Melissa also has experience as a major policy research project manager. And if you would prefer your instruction in Mandarin, no problem! She is fluent in both spoken and written Chinese.

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Areté is often equated, seamlessly, with the English terms "virtue," "excellence," "goodness," and "knowledge." It embodies a belief that "the highest human potential is knowledge and all other human abilities are derived from this central capacity."

Make Grading Easier with Blackboard's Assignment Manager

By Kelly Nolin

Manager, Faculty Corner and TLR

When I was a little girl playing “teacher” to a classroom of dolls, I loved grading their assignments. I remember drawing big red As and Fs on various pieces of scribbled-on paper. It was exhilarating. This semester I taught College Writing for the first time and discovered a bitter truth: grading papers is not fun.

I enjoyed reading my students' essays, but commenting and evaluating takes a lot of time. I wanted a way to simplify the process. As the Manager of Training and Assessment in CTE I've worked a lot with Blackboard. I've discussed the merits of Assignment Manager over the Digital Drop-box and extolled the virtues of electronic grading. Up until this semester, though, I'd never done it myself.

I decided to use Assignment Manager for several reasons. First, when I created an assignment it was automatically added to Blackboard's Gradebook. This meant I could keep my grades in one place and my students would have instant access to them. Second, Assignment Manager has a date/time stamp so I always knew whether a paper was submitted on time. Third, I don't have the best handwriting in the world. Electronic grading seemed a good way to ensure my comments were legible. Finally, I liked the idea of not lugging around a stack of papers since these essays were accessible online.

The first time my students submitted their papers electronically I spent a lot of time explaining the process. I gave them a demonstration and written instructions. All but one were successful. By the end of the semester, they were pros. They'd submit their papers, I'd use Microsoft Word's “Insert Comment” function to provide feedback, and then I'd upload the papers back into

Blackboard. My students could then access their grades and my comments. If I spent Sunday grading papers, my students didn't have to wait until our class on Tuesday to see how they'd done.

Electronic grading worked well for me. What did my students think? Midway through the semester I asked. An unscientific—but anonymous—survey indicated they liked it. Many said electronic grading is easier to read and pinpoints exactly what is being commented on. Others mentioned that they

liked not having to print their papers because it saved money, toner cartridges, and trees. I continued to use the Assignment Manager all semester. While it never actually made grading “fun,” it did make grading easier.

If you'd like to learn more about electronic grading, Assignment Manager, or Gradebook, please contact CTE's Teaching and Learning Resources Office at x3904 or stop by our office in Hurst Hall, room 11.

Why is AU's Teaching Conference Named After Her?

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A teacher's teacher, Ann Ferren's resume reflects an astute servant to the cause of higher education. Serving recently as the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Radford University, Ann Ferren's career at American University included the positions of Interim Provost and Assistant Provost for Academic Development throughout the early and mid 1990s. But her greatest impact was in the years preceding. Between 1980 and 1985, as an Associate Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences, Ferren wrote and administered a grant from the Mellon Foundation

for faculty development within the college. Predicated on more than ten years of teaching experience, it was this grant that laid the foundation for what is now the Ann Ferren Teaching Conference, making paramount the importance of clear learning objectives and improving the quality of communication between professors and their students.

Ferren served as the Director of the General Education Program between 1987 and 1992. During that time her work was responsible for shaping the battery of courses identified as fundamental within the general education program, which students are required to take, to this day, during their matriculation at American University. This work has not gone unnoticed; in 1990 she was honored for her work by the National Resource Center for the Study of the First Year Experience.

Interest in teaching and inspiring teachers has been an emphasis throughout her career, to the point where Ferren has studied Preparing Future Faculty programs at universities across the country (with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts). The title of the conference is one more acknowledgement of an outstanding teaching professor.



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Is There a Videoconference in Your Future?

By Jim Lee

Associate Director, Teaching and Technology

Each semester CTE is amazed at the many ways the AU community has found to make use of videoconferencing. This semester, Professor Jim Mittleman from SIS gave a lecture on globalization to a class in Greece. Professor Susan McDonic from Anthropology had a well known author from the University of Pennsylvania as a guest lecturer. Professor Sue Headlee and her Washington Semester Class met online with a class from Monterrey Tech in Mexico to discuss the impacts of NAFTA 10 years after its inception. Psychology Professor Zehra Peynircioglu chaired a dissertation defense where one of the committee members was from Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. The AU chapter of the US Foreign Policy Association, a student group, twice held videoconferences moderated by the World Bank that linked to six universities around the world. One was held on World AIDS day. Senam Bakar held a staff information session on AU admittance policies with students and administrators from Qatar via the U.S. State Department. By moving people virtually instead

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Patrick Allitt's Classroom Survival Tips

By John Doolittle

Associate Director, TLR

Many of the faculty who attended last September's day-long session "Surviving (and Thriving) in the First Five Years of Teaching and Beyond" by Emory University Professor Patrick Allitt found it useful and inspiring. Allitt, who directs Emory's Center for Teaching and Curriculum, discussed his techniques for managing a survey course. Allitt is demanding of his students: chewing gum, eating, and wearing hats are not allowed in his classes. The history professor also puts demands on himself: learning students' names early in the semester and being genuinely enthusiastic about every course he teaches.

CTE's Source of Brainpower

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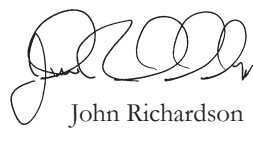
CTE's culture has much in common with the very best consulting firms whose niche is the interface between customer support and high-end information technology applications. These were described in an October 5th *Economist* survey entitled "The Battle for Brainpower." We recognize the importance of recruiting top talent for our student staff positions and empowering them to go the extra mile for our faculty clients. As we recruit new graduate student staff members each year, we are on the front lines, fighting tenaciously to win the battle for brainpower. We know that those we seek to hire have other options, mostly outside the university. When CTE wins the battle for brainpower, it is AU faculty members who benefit, most of all.

Allitt demonstrated his classroom style by inviting people from the audience to become participants in learning exercises. The Center for Teaching Excellence's training manager, Dr. Kelly Nolin, was asked to read excerpts from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. During her reading Allitt kept interrupting with questions about the meaning being conveyed. Nolin may not have enjoyed it but the assembly saw how to use class presentations to stimulate learning and thinking.

Most faculty who responded to a survey following the event indicated the session was interesting and helpful. Many respondents said they planned to incorporate some of the techniques Allitt presented in their courses such as setting boundaries in the classroom, using the syllabus as a contract, reading aloud to ensure students complete assignments and videotaping class activities. Others found the overall discussion provocative but the techniques suggested less helpful. One responded that more professors need to attend this type of workshop in order to combat "dull and colorless" teaching.

Several faculty mentioned they would welcome more sessions on pedagogy. Specific suggestions included learning how to make teaching a performance art so students enjoy the learning process, dealing with grade inflation, and a discussion on how to tailor expectations when teaching freshmen versus upper-class students. Finally, someone jokingly suggested a session where Kelly Nolin reads all the great American leaders' speeches for a half day.

CTE looks forward to bringing sessions like these to campus. If you have ideas for helping faculty teach better, contact the Center for Teaching Excellence at CTE@american.edu.



John Richardson

Because your office doesn't have a water cooler, scanner, free coffee...or a couch.

Faculty Corner Hurst 204B

Mon-Thu 9:30am-8:00pm
Fri 9:30am-5:30pm

Call or email us for a laptop, projector or iPod loan
facultycorner@american.edu
202-885-2734



CTE Hours & Locations

MAIN OFFICE

Hurst Hall 206, x2117

Mon - Fri: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

BLACKBOARD

Hurst Hall 11, x2553

Mon - Fri: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

FACULTY CORNER

Hurst Hall 204B, x2734

Mon - Thu: 9:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Fri: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

TEACHING & LEARNING RESOURCES

Hurst Hall 11, x3904

Mon - Fri: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

AUDIO & VIDEO SYSTEMS & SERVICES

Anderson Lower Level, x2296

Mon - Thu: 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

Fri: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

(later as requested)

Sat & Sun: as requested

NEW MEDIA CENTER

Hurst Hall 212, x2560

Mon - Thu: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

Fri: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Sun: noon - 11:00 p.m.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

RESEARCH LAB (SSRL)

Hurst Hall 202, x3862

Mon - Thu: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

Fri: 9:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Sat: noon - 7:00 p.m.

Sun: 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC

ADMINISTRATION LAB

Ward - Sub Terrace, x3866

Mon - Thu: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.

Fri: 9:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Sat: noon - 7:00 p.m.

STARS LAB (for students)

Hughes Hall - First floor, x3709

Open 24 hours, staffed:

Mon - Thu: 6:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.

Sat - Sun: 1:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Quick Answers to Questions about "Skype"

By Jim McCabe

Manager, Web Courseware

"I leave Skype on all the time at work and also at home in the evenings," said Professor Sachiko Aoshima who teaches Japanese in the Language and Foreign Studies Department. "If I'm available in the evening, I'll pick up the call," she said.

Most of the students' questions are straightforward. They ask about grammar or they ask about the homework due the next day. Conversations begin in Japanese but switch to English if the question gets too complicated. Most of the conversations in the evening are quick: only two or three exchanges. Students like Skype because it saves them time when they are busy. They can get their questions answered without walking across campus to a traditional office hour.



Skype is a free application from <http://www.skype.com> which provides free calls over the Internet to US and international Skype accounts and very inexpensive calls to US and international phone numbers. Like Instant Messenger, Skype will show other users on your contact list if you are available.

"When I introduced Skype at the beginning of the semester a number of students already had accounts that they were using to call their friends or family. The other students created their accounts very easily. And I didn't have to talk about equipment. They were all able to find what they needed on their own." (A headset and mic for Skype is about \$20.)

A second use of Skype is to practice conversation before the oral mid-

term examination and the oral final exam, Aoshima explained. For these longer practice sessions, students will make appointments beforehand, she said. "I like Skype because it gives students an opportunity to practice Japanese with me that IM doesn't do."

For additional information about the uses of Skype in higher education, please see: <http://zircon.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/lta/archives/lta47.php>

Meetings Via Video

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of physically, videoconferencing has saved about 36,000 miles in air travel.

This semester we began a new experiment with a technology I call "videoconference lite" (VCL). Expensive videoconference systems are becoming a thing of the past. The next generation will be much simpler and more mobile. Camera quality is miniaturizing and Internet bandwidth increasing; that makes a ubiquitous system possible. VCL involves using a mini-camera with an audio input that is now readily available from providers such as LogiTech and Apple. In fact, new Apple computers come with such capacity built into the monitor (which also contains the CPU). Free services such as Skype support an interface that allows video to video presentation that is of quite good quality. For small meetings, this can be displayed on a computer screen. For larger meetings this can be projected onto a larger screen (allowing for some pixelization or distortion). Although the words will ultimately hold sway, that bit of humanity that video captures makes the experience real.

Call Jim Lee at x2285 if you want to be part of videoconferencing next semester.