

Reflections on CTE's 'Culture' in Our 10th Anniversary Year

Letter from the Director

CTE will celebrate its 10th anniversary during the 2008-2009 academic year. Landmark anniversaries are times for celebration and stock-taking. In the past ten years, CTE has evolved and changed unimaginably. But one theme remains from the pages of founding Director Jack Child's first Annual Report: CTE's mission is to facilitate mutually affirming, empowering relationships between learning, teaching and technology at American University.

CTE has evolved and grown by providing value-added services to our clients – primarily faculty and students, but also other AU Community Members. I believe a critical ingredient for success is what we call “the CTE culture.” It has enabled us to respond to new challenges, undertake new functions and build strong, collegial relationships throughout the AU community. It will be a source of resilience in the face of future challenges. What is the essence of CTE's culture? Here is what I have gleaned from many discussions in meetings, annual retreats and ‘around the water cooler.’

In CTE we believe that commitment to innovative teaching and learning must be the driving force for applying technology in all aspects of the educational process. To play its appropriate role, technology must be useful and accessible. Communications from those who purvey technology must be respectful, clear and empowering.

In CTE we believe that good stewardship to faculty, students and other members of the AU community is the overriding priority. When an AU community member seeks us out, we never tell them their need is “not our job.” If we cannot directly respond to a concern, it is our responsibility to connect the client with someone who can. In an era where ‘customer service’ seems to be at the bottom of many organizations' priority lists, we strive to be an exception.

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By Anna Olsson
Assistant Manager, Faculty Corner

The Greening of the Faculty Corner

The idea to green the Faculty Corner was sparked by a discussion during the workshop “Greening AU: Sustainability on Campus” at the 2008 Ann Ferren Teaching Conference. One of the themes of the workshop was how to improve AU's low ranking on a recently published list of the country's Most Sustainable Campuses. “Why not start small?” was our initial thought, and a look around the room was enough to identify at least a dozen places to begin. Our efforts

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New faculty members Jessica Uscinksi (Physics) and Tatjana Lichtenstein (History) at New Faculty Orientation.

Teaching/Learning Center Growth in Higher Education

By John Doolittle

CTE Associate Director,

Teaching & Learning Resources

Ten years ago, AU's Center for Teaching Excellence began serving faculty with workshops, Blackboard training and consultations designed to improve the academic experience for both students and teachers. Establishing a center to improve teaching and learning was fairly fresh in 1997, although several universities had already established such programs.

The University of Michigan claims its Center for Research on Teaching and Learning as the first in the country. Its new venture was designed to "promote a University culture that values and rewards teaching, respects and supports individual differences among learners, and encourages the creation of learning environments in which diverse students can learn and excel."

The goals of Michigan's CRTL were among those that stimulated the

creation of similar centers in the early 1970s. According to a report by the Office of Higher Education, teaching centers were developed by colleges and universities in response to student demands for more relevant teaching, and an influx of non-traditional students.¹

The movement caught on; Hofstra University's Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence's website lists 302 such centers at colleges and universities across the nation. The words Teaching and Learning are most commonly found in the names of these centers along with the words Excellence, Technology, Innovation, and Professional Development. The words Future Faculty appear in several titles and in two instances, Teaching Assistants.

The reason for the proliferation of teaching centers is best described by the director of Michigan's Center for Research on Teaching and Learning. Professor Constance Ewing Cook

writes that, "These days, the hottest issue in higher education may well be student learning—how to improve, measure, and ensure it." She goes on to say that department chairs are too busy to accept responsibility for leadership in teaching support and individual faculty often lack time and training to be a reliable source of help. Cook adds that teaching centers are of value to a campus because they "facilitate networking, connecting instructors with common interests across disciplines, and organizing events at which faculty come together and share their disciplinary perspectives and strategies."²

¹ Lisa Firing Lenze, "Developing a Teaching Center on Campus," NEA Higher Education Research Center Update, 3 no. 2 (1997).

² Constance Ewing Cook and Mary Deane Sorcinelli, "The Value of a Teaching Center," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 26 April 2002, B21.

A Greener Faculty Corner

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included replacing all light bulbs with low-energy fluorescent bulbs; activating automatic sleep mode on all computers, printing all internal documents on scrap paper; serving fair-trade coffee and tea; providing a space for personal coffee mugs to lower the consumption of paper cups; recycling anything recyclable in the office; and using recycled and unbleached office products whenever possible. A posting on Today@AU announcing the launch of the Faculty Corner's Green Initiative in early February prompted a visit from the student group Eco-Sense, who invited us to participate in their Eco-Certification Program. Since then, we

have become one of the first offices on campus to be awarded an Eco-Certification sticker. Our next thought was "Why stop here?" Utilizing our unique position at the juncture of teaching and learning, we are now considering how to incorporate sustainability into our activities in general. One of the new projects being launched this fall is an initiative to encourage greener teaching. This initiative involves a more intense promotion of the use of Blackboard as a tool for more sustainable courses, and the development of a Green Teaching Certificate in collaboration with Eco-Sense. Just like we made big progress by starting small in our own

Earn Your Apples



Learn how at

www.american.edu/cte/greenteaching/

space, we are now hoping that faculty members will consider doing the same through measures such as giving online assignments, posting electronic readings, and being green role models to their students.

CTE's Beginnings: An Interview with Jack Child

By Carolyn O'Donnell
CTE Director's Office

An idea emerged at the Ann Ferren Teaching Conference in 1996: to establish a permanent office for enhancing teaching practices. A leader was chosen to head this task: Jack Child, professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies in the Department of Foreign Language. Finally, a space was located in an empty part of Battelle Tompkins. Thus, ten years ago, CTE was born. Jack Child spoke about his main accomplishments, and how he laid the foundation for CTE.

Professor Child's first duty as director of CTE was truly unglamorous — "cleaning out the pigeon guano." CTE was given empty, unused space in Battelle Tompkins, which had been home to a local gang of pigeons. Child and his assistant were responsible for turning this space into the main office for CTE, and therefore had to clean out the pigeon remnants, move out the old furniture and bring in new furniture and equipment. With the help of his assistant Allison Markov, they turned the space into CTE's first main office.

One of Child's main accomplishments reflects his creative teaching style and aptitude for technology. He established the "model classroom," which exists today in the same space, Hurst 211. The idea was to have a classroom close to the CTE office, with all the amenities ideal for excellent classroom instruction. Child stressed that "model does not mean flashy modern. It means what you do in it." Today, with projectors, laptops and modular furniture, the model



classroom operates under the same principle of providing amenities for excellence in education.

Professor Child revealed that the "one thing [he] thinks was most successful was the Small Projects Fund." This project, which is known today as the Small Grants Program, is still one of the most successful CTE programs. The Small Projects Fund helped fund creative teaching and learning in the classroom. Child wanted to cut through the red tape of the reimbursement process at AU, and devised a simple program, showing faculty they have support.

Initially, CTE focused on working with faculty members directly. Responsibility for supporting teaching and learning technologies fell to others. Now CTE plays a more direct role in providing audio-visual, multimedia, quantitative research and computer-based learning system technologies to both faculty and students. However CTE has remained true to the 'Vision' statement that its founding director shared with AU's community more than a decade ago: "provide faculty with support and opportunities to develop their teaching skills, while introducing them to a range of diverse and new teaching approaches."

10th Anniversary

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In CTE, we believe an affirming, empowering work environment that fosters innovation, creativity and risk taking is the foundation of good stewardship. We primarily view ourselves as educators, mentors and colleagues, not as "managers," "staff" or "part-time workers." We care about each other's well-being and have fun together. CTE's part-time student staff members play pivotal roles in our organization; they are major sources of energy, creativity, innovation and self-renewal.

In CTE we believe in celebrating our successes and acknowledging those who make them possible, especially community members who are not part of CTE. We tell the truth about our failures, take responsibility for them and move on. We are especially committed to truth telling in our relationships with each other. We know that trial, experimentation and error are essential to fulfilling our mission.


John Richardson

save the date
Friday, January 9, 2009



20th Annual Ann Ferren
Teaching Conference

Travel Better with a Mini-Notebook

By Jim McCabe

Manager, Web Courseware

Are you tired of lugging your five or six pound laptop back and forth to campus? Does your laptop, and its accessories, make your shoulder ache after a long walk through Logan, National or O'Hare?

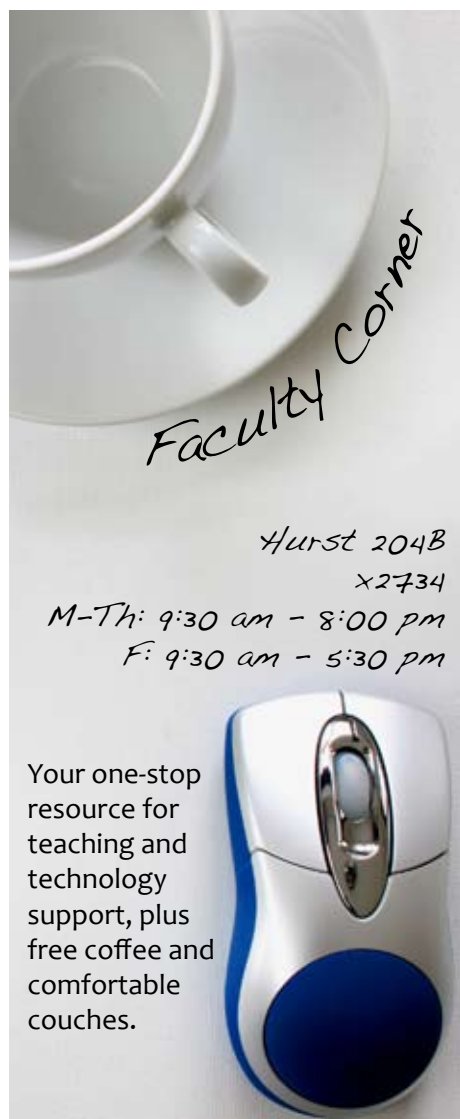
Fortunately, help has arrived with a new category of laptops called mini-notebooks which has shrunk the weight of laptops by about half. Minis weigh in the 2.6 to 3 lb range.

Screen size is also smaller. A typical mini has a 10" screen rather than the 14" or 15.4" screen found in full-size laptops. Reviewers found the keyboards in the first generation of mini-notebooks too compressed for accurate typing; newer models now offer larger keyboards and recent reviews of keyboards have been much more favorable.

Read reviews of two popular mini-notebooks – the Asus Eee PC1000H and the MSI Wind – at

<http://www.laptopmag.com/review/laptops/asus-eee-pc-100h.aspx> and

<http://www.laptopmag.com/review/laptops/msi-wind.aspx>



Fall Events

Thursday, September 4

ANNUAL FACULTY LUNCH

11 a.m. - 2 p.m., The Mud Box,

LL University Library

Come meet your colleagues on the teaching faculty and library faculty who can help you with your transition to American University.

Thursday, September 25

NOONTIME CONVERSATION

12:00-1:30 p.m.

Mary Graydon Center, Room 5

Teaching the Whole Student and the Whole Class: Building Student-Centered Learning Communities

Friday, January 9, 2009

ANN FERREN TEACHING CONFERENCE

Mary Graydon Center

Join your colleagues before the spring semester, for teaching tips, new technologies, pedagogical panels, and more.

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

AFFAIRS 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: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

STARS LAB (for undergraduates)

Hughes Hall - First floor, x3709

Open 24 hours, staffed:

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

Sat: 3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Sun: 3:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.