Areté

virtue   excellence   goodness   knowledge

Table of Contents

Areté (Greek) 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."

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Center for Teaching Excellence
★ CTE ★

CTE'S New Faculty Development Role

Letter from the Director

Provost Scott Bass has made strengthening faculty members' creative scholarship at AU a top priority. He intends to do this by reorienting AU's institutional culture to more explicitly affirm and facilitate such work. He has asked CTE to assume broader responsibilities for all aspects of faculty development, beginning with a focus on creative scholarship. Since I have always viewed creative scholarship and teaching as mutually reinforcing, I am excited about this. CTE's expanded mission will enable us to provide leadership in attaining two key goals in the recently adopted strategic plan: Epitomize the scholar-teacher ideal and demonstrate distinction in graduate education.

We are already creating one or more *Scholars' Support Communities*. This initiative will facilitate preparation of the strongest possible proposals for the research funding available from the Dean of Academic Affairs and, possibly, other funding that is available locally. It will support development of realistic, attainable, individual faculty development plans that make priorities and intentions explicit. It will create a process for deans and department heads to acknowledge and sign

TWO KEY GOALS:

- *Epitomize the scholar-teacher ideal*
- *Demonstrate distinction in graduate education.*

on to these plans. We will support preparation of proposals required for the Junior Faculty Teaching Release Program that are of such high quality that a substantial proportion receive funding.

In addition to creating Scholars' Support Communities, we will be seeking, for priority attention, cross disciplinary proposals, involving faculty from several schools and CAS departments that offer particularly promising prospects for substantial outside funding.

We need to be clear about the challenge we face at American University. Creative, productive scholarship requires uninterrupted time. Uninterrupted time requires money. We must raise funds from outside AU so that we can have the time and other resources to do our scholarly work. Given its tuition-dependence, the resources AU has set aside to support such work are generous. But internal resources can rarely do more than 'prime the pump.' Most funds needed to make uninterrupted time available for scholarship must come from faculty who take an unequivocal stand that creative, productive scholarship is a top priority in their lives.

The purpose of CTE's new faculty development initiatives is to support faculty in taking such a stand. We will seek to

create communities that support you. We will highlight the roles of university staff members who can assist you. We will support them in meeting your needs effectively. We will ensure that locally available funds are efficiently marshaled on your behalf. We will be your partners in seeking outside funding. As we already do in the areas of teaching and learning, CTE will serve, if need be, as your advocate and your ombudsman.

I welcome your thoughts on how we can carry out this new faculty development role most effectively. Our goal is to make things work for you.

John Richardson

Bring That Mac Adapter With You!

By Bob Brownlee, *Assoc. Dir of Audio & Video Systems & Services*

Mac users on the AU campus will now need to provide their own adapters for computer projector use. For many years, the Audio & Video Systems and Services group of CTE has provided special support for Mac users who wished to make use of computer projectors in the classroom and for special events. Special adapters are needed to connect Macs to the standard VGA connections in classrooms. Originally, Apple packaged these adapters with the computers, and AV maintained a small number of adapters on hand as a courtesy for users who had forgotten the adapter at home. However, three things have changed:

(1) Apple no longer provides adapters with computers;

(2) With each new kind of laptop made by Apple, a new adapter style has been added, raising the number of kinds of adapter needed by the AU community to at least five;

(3) The price of adapters has increased by 50%.

Given the changes, and an unfortunate tendency of borrowers to not return these adapters, it has become impossible for AV to continue to offer this courtesy. This means it is even more important than before to remember to bring a Mac adapter with you when you want to make use of computer projectors!

Mac adapters can be purchased at www.apple.com, www.amazon.com, the Apple Store in Bethesda, or Best Buy in Tenleytown. Depending on the model of Mac you have, you will need one of the following adapters:

• DVI to VGA (old Macbook Pro)

• Mini-DVI to VGA (iMac Intel Core Duo, MacBook, and 12-inch PowerBook G4)

• Micro-DVI to VGA (original MacBook Air)

• VGA Display Adapter, or "Mini-VGA to VGA" (eMac, iMac G5, 12-inch PowerBook G4, or iBook)

• Mini-Display Port to VGA (latest models of MacBook Pro & Macbook, and the new Macbook Air)

This list is just a rough guide: bring your computer with you when you buy, to make sure you are buying the right adapter for your laptop. And then put that adapter in your laptop bag and make sure you bring it with you to class!

Ever Wanted to be a Rock Star? *You Can Create an iTunes Album for Your Lectures*

Jim Lee, *Assoc. Dir., Teaching & Technology*

AU is creating an iTunes site to host audio and video presentations on campus. An iTunes site is something built from the ground up. The building blocks of an iTunes site are "albums," a concept they have migrated from selling music to engaging students. The idea of an album is that it comprises a set of class lectures ("songs") that are added to over time. Think of the semester as your "studio time." You can even create your own "album cover."

There are a couple of ways that faculty can use iTunes. One approach is to record and post your lecture/song before the class and require students to listen to it before the session. That way, the whole period can be devoted to discussing the materials. Another approach is to record the lecture in the classroom and post it after the lecture. Students then can return to the lectures when preparing for quizzes or exams to review key concepts. Either way, these materials can be recycled and used in later classes or become essential parts of creating an online course. Through RSS feeds, students who sign up will receive notification when new "songs" are posted to the "album".

You don't need to be into rock, country western, bluegrass, soul, folk, grunge, klezmir, hip-hop, rap, classical, or zydeco. You don't need to know about Pink Floyd ("Another Brick in the Wall"), Chuck Berry ("School Day"), or Alice Cooper ("School's Out").

But, if you are interested in writing some songs and creating your album next semester, contact Jim Lee in CTE at x2285 or jlee@american.edu.

It's Easy "Teaching Green"

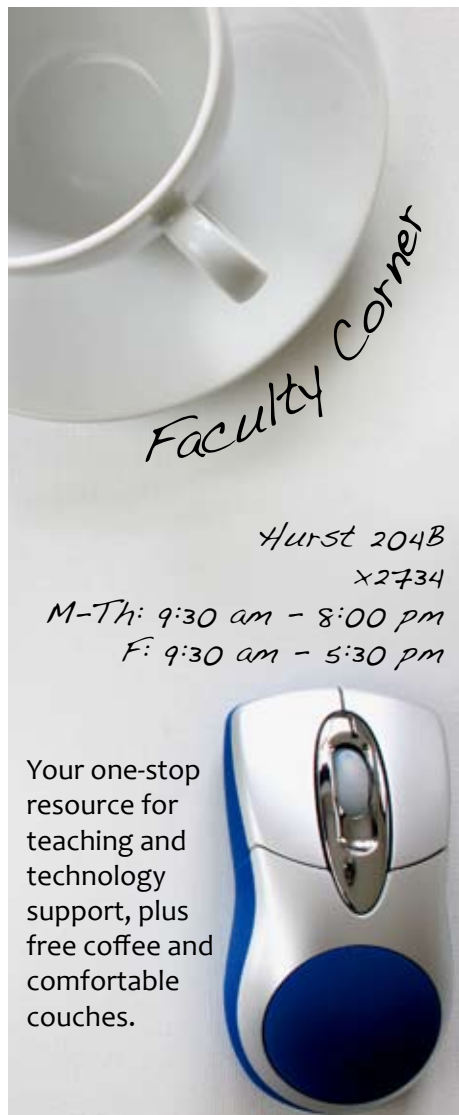**By Kelly Nolin, Ph.D.,** *Manager, Training, Assessment, and the Faculty Corner*

What does it mean to "teach green"? In general, it's an effort by professors to save paper, conserve energy, reduce pollution, and promote sustainability. It can be as simple as using scrap paper for classroom activities, allowing students to bring laptops to class to take notes, or posting readings on Blackboard. Some professors have their students submit their papers through Blackboard and then grade them electronically. Others give online quizzes rather than paper ones or use video conferencing to bring in guest speakers.

Last semester, the Center for Teaching Excellence and the student group Eco-Sense created the Green Teaching Certificate. This program was piloted in the fall as an attempt to reward faculty members who are green teachers, while giving green courses a familiar face among students. The Green Teaching Certificate is based on a system of self-reporting. Faculty members can qualify by answering a number of questions about their efforts to make their courses more sustainable. Upon evaluation, qualified courses are rewarded

Faculty Corner

Hurst 204B
x2734
M–Th: 9:30 am – 8:00 pm
F: 9:30 am – 5:30 pm

Your one-stop resource for teaching and technology support, plus free coffee and comfortable couches.

with a seal representing one of four different levels of the Green Teaching Certificate. This seal can be put on syllabi and Blackboard pages to market classes as green.

Forty–four courses were certified last semester. CTE and Eco-Sense celebrate all these efforts by listing certified green teachers and the innovative things they do on a website. This is a great resource for finding ideas to incorporate into your own teaching. For example, Professor David Carlini (CAS-Biology) requires his students to give poster presentations at the end of the semester. Rather than having them print out the posters, though, he has them project their posters onto the wall using presentation software. Professor Jack Child (CAS-LFS) teaches his students about conserving energy. He drops the blinds in his classroom when the sun hits them in the fall and spring and he raises the blinds in the winter. Professor

Anna Olsson (SPA) doesn't use any paper at all. She posts the slides and notes from her lectures on the Blackboard site for her class. She also accepts assignments from her students electronically and grades them using MS Word.

The Green Teaching Certificate is an ongoing effort. The survey for spring courses has been expanded and updated based on feedback from those who completed it last semester. Teaching green can be quite easy if you start by taking small steps. As an added benefit, students' responses have been overwhelmingly positive. We hope more professors will begin to add green aspects to their classes in the spring. If you're interested in certifying your own course, please visit http://www.american.edu/cte/greenteaching/ or stop by the Faculty Corner in Hurst Hall, room 204B.

Best Practices for Media Assignments

Kelly Donnellan, *Manager, New Media Center*

Creating a media assignment for your class can enrich the student learning experience regardless of the subject. It promotes critical thinking, creative expression, collaborative learning and synthesis of knowledge about the subject matter. But they can also be sources of considerable stress for students.

How can you structure an engaging assignment without creating a course full of frustrated students and straining campus resources? When designing the assignment, consider the following:

Media assignments take planning and time.

Regardless of what media you use (audio, video, photo,) the more time you put into planning the assignment, and the more time the students have to execute the assignment, the better the end result.

A good rule of thumb is to provide a minimum of 4 weeks per project. Try to have media assignments towards the beginning of the semester versus at finals when finding time on a computer is at a premium.

Time is also a significant factor if the class needs to have specialized software training or equipment access to complete the assignment. Call x2560 early in the semester to schedule training appointments with the New Media Center.

Build in milestones:

Structure the assignment for students by assigning deadlines for specific portions of the project. Having deadlines for scripts and rough cuts before the final due date enables you to check your students' progress, their understanding of specialized software, and helps avoid the pitfalls of procrastination.

Consider group projects with specific tasks for each member:

A group of five can have a designated writer, director, producer/organizer, and editor. This spreads out the work and makes the team collaborate to get the project done. One person in charge of submitting the final script, renting equipment, reserving computers for editing etc.

Think small:

Making a 5-minute video is a tremendous amount of work, regardless of working in a group. When you consider the amount of time it will take to generate and gather assets, become proficient with the software, and manage the project, it could very easily take more than 50 hours to get to the final product.

Projects with a time limit of 30 seconds to 1 minute are more manageable and can have richer content with improved quality.

Build off existing skill set:

Media assignments don't have to be complicated. Students can create engaging media presentations using Microsoft Office PowerPoint by embedding pictures, audio files, and videos to make an integrated presentation. Microsoft Office is readily available across the campus on both the Mac and PC platforms.

How big is your class? What resources are available to you?

A media assignment for a class of 40 is challenging to accommodate. For classes larger than 40, it can become tremendously difficult to schedule equipment and editing time if not planned exceedingly well.

Staggering the start and due date for assignments is an excellent way to lessen the demand on students and lab staff. For example: Groups 1 & 2 start week 3, deliver week 7. Groups 3 & 4 start week 4, deliver week 8 etc.

Students who have them should use their laptop computers, cameras, cell phones and other devices to complete the project. This will free up resources for those students who don't have their own.

If you'd like more information about designing a media assignment, or the resources available in the New Media Center, contact Kelly Donnellan at dkelly@american.edu or at x2797. I look forward to working with you and seeing great projects from your class!

Lessons from the 2008 Lilly Teaching Conference

John Doolittle, *Associate Director, Teaching and Learning Resources*

I attended the International Lilly Conference on College Teaching at Miami University in Ohio with over 600 faculty members from colleges and universities across the country and abroad. The large number of sessions, workshops and plenary gatherings were tracked into over 30 themes related to student learning, faculty development and assessment.

The issue of grading came up during several discussions and I witnessed a number of thoughtful and skilled teachers express strong opinions about grading. The general complaint was that grades interfere with and complicate learning. No one suggested that grades be eliminated but instead there was a general consensus they are a force that must be endured. During a session on syllabus preparation, Ken Bain, who wrote *What the Best College Teachers Do*, offered

a partial remedy to the grading issue. Bain encouraged faculty to build assessment criteria with their students derived from what is being taught and learned. The benefit of this approach is that it increases the likelihood that teacher and students share an understanding of what a particular grade means.

The godfather of the teaching center movement, Wilbert McKeachie, taught me the value of reading and contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning. McKeachie described how his research in Psychology was rooted in examinations of how people learn. These studies were the inspiration for the establishment of the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. We were told about the growing number of refereed journals that focus on teaching, including one based at Miami, *The Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*.

I learned how relatively successful AU's CTE is compared with similar teaching centers at other schools. Talking with representatives from these schools about our annual Ann Ferren Teaching Conference, they were envious to hear how many of our faculty come to the annual event. Although the range of services offered by AU's CTE is similar to that found on many campuses, the depth of our delivery of those services is somewhat unusual. For example, the hands-on training we provide faculty and students is not mirrored by many other teaching centers. During a lunch, I met a faculty member from a private urban school who alone comprised the teaching services for his campus – and without any extra pay or reduction in his teaching load. This situation may be unusual, but it is reflective of the few resources many campuses devote to pedagogy found at many large and small campuses across the country.

Ken Bain was also the keynote speaker for the 2009 Ann Ferren Teaching Conference.

The Lilly Conference's creator, Milton Cox, taught me the value of creating Faculty Learning Communities, which invite faculty to participate in a goal that they have a role in shaping. The model for such communities has been created in such a way to serve the needs of both the institution and the faculty members. I heard about the range of projects that have used the model and what made them successful. FLCs embody elements that empower faculty to reach their potential as members of a university community.

The closing session at the conference featured a professor/administrator who urged the audience to look ahead as the learning environment around us changes. Jim Groccia, who heads up Auburn's Center for Teaching Excellence, reminded everyone about the changing nature of the college student and the challenges they will face once they leave the university. He emphasized that current graduate students will most likely not find jobs at the kind of institution where they are currently studying, but are more likely to take positions at non-research schools such as community colleges. These graduate students will need to know how to teach as much as how to conduct research. Groccia asked the packed room how many institutions were preparing future faculty and about 10 hands went up. Mine was one of them because of the commitment AU has had to the Greenberg Seminar program for the past 20 years.

As I drove back to the Cincinnati airport, I was comforted that so many faculty members were dedicated to their teaching that they wanted to share their skills with others. One reason for their willingness to share is the congenial atmosphere at the Lilly. I guess a good teacher is a person one enjoys sharing ideas with. Well, I sure enjoyed the company and plan to go again.