Farewell to Bryn Johnson
John Richardson

This holiday season will conclude the service of an exceptional CTE staff member, Assistant Director Bryn Johnson. Enumerating his accomplishments could fill an entire Areté issue, but since Bryn is not only a modest man, but the editor, he would not permit this.

Bryn mastered Datatel's intricacies and created a system of clear, transparent budgetary oversight. He initiated and helped create the format for CTE's highly successful retreats. He successfully orchestrated the consolidation of CTE in Hurst Hall, ahead of schedule. He created CTE's outreach group, The Dynamos and its Professional Development Program for Managers. He insisted that achieving CTE's mission could not come at the expense of staff members' well being. He ensured that the logistics of CTE events matched the quality of the subject-matter being presented – and much more. In the words of one Management Group member, "when Bryn entered a room, you knew he was a force to be reckoned with."

The opportunity to know and work with Bryn has been a gift and a privilege. We thank him for his dedication, his wit, his energy, his competence, his creativity and his commitment to CTE's mission. The ideals he exemplified, combining the highest standard of professionalism with fundamental humanity and a compassionate heart, will continue as a beacon for all of us.

We will miss Bryn and we will not forget him.
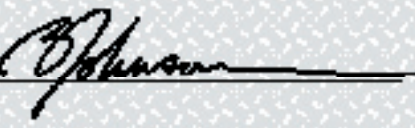
Areté

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Serving AU Community Members, Especially Faculty: CTE's <u>Everyday</u> Priority

This issue of Areté will mark 30 months since CTE assumed its present configuration. During this period, we consolidated in Hurst Hall, created the Faculty Corner, expanded workshops for faculty, facilitated an expansion of Blackboard use from 25 percent to more than 80 percent, tripled our Small Grants Program – and much more Strengthening AU's audiovisual services is a new and challenging priority.

Extolling CTE accomplishments for an entire column would be easy, but could evoke the hubris of complacency. CTE staffers must continue to earn the trust and support of AU community members, especially faculty, each new day; one day at a time. The following are brief excerpts from a document, entitled Serving the AU Community and Relating to Each Other that we share with each new CTE staff member.

- AU faculty members are our most important clientele. There is no more effective way to serve American University as a whole than by supporting faculty in doing their work. No matter how busy we are faculty requests and needs take priority.
- Events where CTE presents its face to the AU community must exhibit the very best that CTE has to offer in professionalism, creativity, collegiality and meticulous attention to every detail.
- CTE staff members are expected to proactively and creatively seek out what needs to be done, without waiting to be told. Being 'on the job' means taking initiative to positively impact every client with whom we come in contact.
- We are all imperfect, so mistakes will happen, despite our good intentions. When we get it wrong in CTE, we acknowledge our errors promptly and publicly. We take personal responsibility and we apologize if that is appropriate. We do our very best to correct the problem and to avoid repeating the error. Then we move on.

I expect you hold us to this standard and to let me know, personally, when we fall short.

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."

One-click to a Blackboard Course

- Log into "my.american.edu"
- Click "Academics" link
- Click "My Class Section Rosters"
- Click "Enable Blackboard" button to activate
- Course will automatically populate within 24 hours

[*Late registrants will be added automatically within a day of their enrollment*]

CTE LOCATIONS

Blackboard
Hurst Hall Rm. 11 | ext. 2553
M-F...9:00-5:00PM

Faculty Corner
Hurst Hall Rm. 204B | ext. 2734
M-Th..9:30-8:00PM
Fri...9:30-5:30PM

New Media Center
Hurst Hall Rm. 212 | ext. 2560
M-Th..9:30-11:00PM
Fri...9:30-5:30PM
Sun..12:00-11:00PM

Social Science Research Lab (SSRL)
Hurst Hall Rm. 202 | ext. 3862
M-Th..9:30-10:00PM
Fri...9:30-7:00PM
Sat..12:00-7:00PM
Sun..10:00-7:00PM

School of Public Administration Lab (SPA)
Ward Bldg. Sub Terrace | ext. 3866
M-Th..9:30-10:00PM
Fri...9:30-7:00PM
Sat..12:00-7:00PM

Teaching and Learning Resources
Hurst Hall Rm. 11 | ext. 3926
M-F...9:00-5:00PM

IN THIS ISSUE

Learning Outcomes on Syllabi
Lyn Stallings

My role serving on the Project Team for Learning Outcomes and Assessment has helped me bring the discussion of assessing outcomes to the Center for Teaching Excellence-and now you. When I first started thinking about how to incorporate learning outcomes in my own mathematics syllabi, I found that I was struggling with the idea because I was trying to list topics and skills within a course. Then, as I shifted to thinking about what I wanted my students to demonstrate, I realized that the learning outcomes transcended the topics covered in the course. The likelihood of my students remembering the quadratic formula or being able to construct an exponential function from data several years after taking my course is very small. What I value more is their ability to understand a mathematical model, answer basic questions about the model, and – more importantly – ask relevant questions about the model. This requires being able to make connections in mathematics and communicate mathematically. I certainly do not mean to discount the importance of demonstrating skills, especially in a mathematics course; but more importantly thinking about the learning that I hope my students will retain helps place those skills in the context of the role of mathematics in their lives.

These reflections led to my first incorporation of learning outcomes on my fall 2004 Finite Mathematics syllabus. By the end of the course, like most faculty, I list goals that I intend for all of my students to meet. However, with learning outcomes as an impetus I challenged them differently. For example, I challenged my students to 'State the primary concepts of the course and how they can be applied to at least one real-life application (via test essay questions, reflection pieces and class discussion.' I also required them to 'Provide an analysis of his or her mathematics ability by identifying strengths, weaknesses, and where resources are available to improve (via test corrections and analyses).'

My students knew from the first day of class that I would be looking for more than just the ability to solve problems on a test. In order to assess their ability to make connections and to communicate those connections, I included activities in my class that revealed what my students were assimilating in terms of concepts and their applications. I am now a firm believer in the value of learning outcomes and I am already revising my syllabi for spring semester. If you are interested in finding out more about learning outcomes on syllabi, please contact me at CTE (x3166 or vstalli@american.edu). CTE will be offer Noontime Conversations on Learning Outcomes on Syllabi this spring.

Faculty Suggestions:
Communicating with Large Classes
Jim McCabe

"I love large classes," said Sarah Menke-Fish, assistant professor in the School of Communication. "I find them to be a lot of fun."

"When you teach a large class, you often have a great mix of students from a variety of majors, geographical areas, and a range from freshmen to seniors in the same class. I see this as an opportunity for students to learn from one another. They will bring such amazing perspectives and backgrounds to class discussions," she said.

"Some of the ways I communicate with both large and small groups are through announcements in Blackboard. After posting the announcement, I will copy and paste the announcement and send it out in an email to all students."

"And through the Discussion Board, I can have an entire class work on an issue or I can break the class up into small groups and then they have the ability to communicate with each other. Obviously, when a professor keeps students' grades in Blackboard, they also always know their status in class.

She emphasized how Blackboard gives her the ability to learn about students' learning disabilities and learning styles before classes even begin.

"I communicate with a new class of students before they ever step foot into the classroom. That way they can share information with me about their learning styles and any special needs they may have. For example, if I have students who say they are visual learners, I know I need to add a visual component to a lecture. The more information I have, the better I am able to meet the student's style of learning."

"I can't imagine teaching a large class without the access I have to Blackboard," Professor Menke-Fish added. She said that she begins each class with an email in Blackboard welcoming them and asking them to respond so that she will know that effective communication has been set up.

John Doolittle, also a professor in the School of Communication, emphasized how Blackboard improves his ability to communicate with his students.

In organizing the class in the very beginning, he posts announcements to make sure students know the flow of each week's classes. And at the end of the semester, he uses Blackboard to tell his students when their final presentations are due, and which other students are in the group making the presentation.

Audio-Visual and the Classroom
Jim Lee and Tim Cegnar

Using audio-visual (AV) resources as part of teaching is no longer a specialized pedagogical skill. AV, in teaching and research, is ubiquitous in each and every department and school at AU. How is AV being used among these new adherents? The following are some general and specific observations for teachers and students.

The Changing Role of AV for Faculty
- Faculty use AV to present basic class documents through a variety of mediums in classes and academic settings. This is an expansion of traditional "overhead" display
- technologies. Faculty now use computerized digital technologies to deliver instruction in a variety of ways (web pages, PowerPoint, music and movies).
- Faculty are capturing their own speaking events through audio and video. DV cameras and related technologies have made capturing events much more widespread.
- Faculty are using videoconferencing as part of instruction and academic interaction and want to use it more.

Using AV for Better Classroom Presentations
- Using audio-visual aids in presentations can greatly enhance a presentation; however, it also has the capacity to cause problems. With over 500 faculty at AU managing requests is a two-way street, in order to assure the proper type of hardware and software set ups.
- Here are some suggestions to maximize classroom AV presentations in the classroom.
- Set up in advance- arrangements should be made at least 24 hours prior to an event, for planning and sanity sake
- Think about the details- try to be as comprehensive as possible in providing relevant information.
- Describe your skill level- tell us about your skills level so we can offer appropriate assistance. Letting us know your needs will help us to provide you and your class more individual attention.
- Use a university laptop for presentations (or Faculty Corner) - multiple laptops can lead to a delay in an already tightly scheduled class. Use a single laptop for multiple presentations. Have students bring in their presentations on a disk or a USB flash drive. Disk drives are however becoming obsolete.

To contact AV call ext 2296 or visit the AV website at

tthttp://www.american.edu/technology/sites/helpdesk/content.cfm?id=99

Providing Software Training One Professor at a Time
Kelly Nolin

Last summer, Indira Somani, an assistant professor in the School of Communication, decided to learn something she'd always wanted to know but never had the opportunity. She wanted to learn how to design and publish a website. Professor Somani had been interested in creating a personal page on the internet but since she didn't have a particular purpose in mind for the site, learning the necessary software always took a backseat to other priorities.

That changed, however, when her father, a full professor at the Southern Illinois University, School of Medicine, passed away in October 2002. Professor Somani decided to build a website as a tribute to him and his work. She knew the basic structure of the site she hoped to create. She even knew that Dreamweaver was a program she could use so that she wouldn't have to learn how to write in HTML code. However, trying to use Dreamweaver on her own was not something she had time to do. That is when she called the Center for Teaching Excellence.

It is fairly well known that CTE offers software workshops to students and faculty. However, professors aren't always able to attend these sessions due to schedule conflicts. This was true in Professor Somani's case, as well. She called CTE and asked if it would be possible to receive one-on-one training over the summer. She was set up with a skilled graduate fellow who met with her almost weekly. They worked together to develop a home page and four supporting pages with links to .PDF files about her father's research, philanthropy, obituaries, and press (www.satusomani.com). Professor Somani says that "the beauty of this whole experience was working with an experienced consultant who also took pride in this project."

While meeting on a weekly basis is a pretty unusual situation for a tutorial, it represents CTE's willingness to provide faculty with the training they want during the time they have. We've met individually with faculty to teach a variety of software programs, assist with the many features of Blackboard, and provide instruction on the use of personal response pads. Our training workshops continue to give participants a good overview of software packages. However, if you find that you have specific questions or need help with a particular project, a one-on-one tutorial may be the best option. Please feel free to call x6077 with any of your training needs.

CTE @ A GLANCE

- **Need research assistance?**
  Call Jim Lee at ext. 2285 [jlee@american.edu]

- **Need to discuss professional development issues?**
  Call John Richardson at ext. 2346

- **Assistance with social science research,**
  help selecting the right software?