A Letter from the Assistant Directors

Spring is a good time for growth, and here at the TLPDC, we are continuing to develop as we meet the changing needs of the University. One new initiative that we are currently working on for the summer is a new training opportunity for graduate students who are unable to participate in the year-long TEACH Program. This program will be open to any graduate students interested in improving their teaching, regardless of their university appointment or progress in their program.

The TLPDC also continues to offer the same outstanding programming and services including workshops, consultations and the annual Advancing Teaching and Learning Conference, which was just held in February and received strong reviews. Dr. Peter Felten from Elon University gave an engaging and stimulating keynote entitled, “In Search of Better Courses: Building Harder Courses that Actually Engage your Students,” and several presenters from Texas Tech University and surrounding institutions offered other wonderful sessions. The TLPDC also continues to build upon our offerings for advisors and other staff members through workshops, webinars, and other opportunities.

We hope to see you around the TLPDC this spring and summer!

Allison P. Boye and Michal M. Logan

TLPDC 2013 Faculty Spotlight

The TLPDC is excited to highlight 6 faculty members for the 2013 calendar year who have demonstrated good teaching and involvement and support for our center. In each issue of our newsletter, a few of them will share some of their favorite teaching ideas with readers. Stay tuned for more in our Fall/Winter 2013 issue!

Our faculty spotlight honorees for 2013 are pictured here. Clockwise from the left, they are:
Dr. Mark Webb (Philosophy), Dr. Matt Baker (Ag Ed & Communication), Dr. Janice Killian (Music), Dr. Courtney Meyers (Ag Ed & Communication), Dr. Scott Hein (Finance), & Dr. Dean Fontenot (Engineering).

In this issue:
- TEACH Program news
- Teaching tips from Dr. Scott Hein
- Service Learning news
- The new instructional diagnosis
- Teaching tips from Dr. Janice Killian
- Instructional Design news
- Teaching Tips from Dr. Courtney Meyers
- Summer Preview
The 2012-13 TEACH Cohort had a great fall semester and is in full-swing for the spring! The Fellows completed teaching portfolios in December, and are now working on many wonderful teaching and learning projects. Several fellows are creating complete online versions of already-existing courses, and others are designing new courses to put in their repertoire, such as the History of Rock and Roll and Utilizing Video Games in Communications. Still others will be engaging in exciting projects such as redesigning a lab manual, studying the effectiveness of multimodal student-directed discussions, and introducing service-learning components into a leadership course.

It is also time for new applications to the 2013-2014 TEACH Program Cohort! The TEACH (Teaching Effectiveness And Career enhancement) Program is intensive and highly selective, assisting Ph.D. students in further developing teaching skills and exploring faculty roles. Program activities include one-on-one consultation, instructor videotaping, comprehensive class feedback, peer observations, workshop attendance, and the development of a professional teaching portfolio and teaching and learning project. Fellows selected for this program are paid a $500 stipend per semester for their active participation.

Applications should be submitted online via the TEACH website at www.tlpd.ttu.edu/teach/apply. The deadline for complete applications is Friday, April 12th, 2013. Applicants are asked to submit a completed application form, a CV, a personal statement, and two faculty recommendations using the online recommendation form. Applicants with complete applications will also be invited to participate in one of several group interviews. Please visit the TEACH website for more details about the personal statement and other application elements. If you have further questions about the program or its application process, feel free to email Dr. Allison Boye, TEACH Program Director, at allison.p.boye@ttu.edu, or Troy Lescher, TEACH Program Senior Consultant, at troy.lescher@ttu.edu.

Faculty members, please spread the word about this nationally-known program to your graduate students!

Teaching Tips from Faculty Spotlight Honoree Dr. Scott Hein

(Professor, Finance)

To me the key to teaching well is accountability. To begin with, I hold myself accountable to deliver the best possible classroom experience for my students and to have fun doing it. This means that I am prepared every day and I come to class ready to engage and challenge students. I implicitly encourage students and fellow instructors to hold me accountable as well. I value input from all to help improve upon what I am doing in class.

I also tell students that I hold them accountable for their learning. I generally provide a reading assignment for each class, as well as asking students to read the recent Wall Street Journal. I tell students that they can expect an unannounced quiz anytime during the semester. I generally ask three or four short answer essay type questions that I personally grade, regardless of the size of the class, and give about ten unannounced quizzes during the course of a regular semester. It is amazing to find unexpected gaps in students’ understanding of a topic by just asking them to explain things in their own words. Correcting these mistakes provides a great way to further enrich knowledge of the material, both for the individual student, as well as for the class as a whole.

Service Learning News

At Texas Tech, service-learning is a pedagogy that links academic study and civic engagement through thoughtfully organized service that meets the needs of the community. There are currently over 900 students enrolled in service-learning courses this spring semester, and a faculty member in every college on campus that has embraced the pedagogy and is committed to the philosophy and practice of service-learning.

The Service Learning Program would also like to announce that there are 85 official “S”-designated service-learning courses at Texas Tech University, including undergraduate and graduate level courses as well as the Law School. The official “S”-designation signifies that the service-learning course provides rigorous and enhanced learning by interconnecting meaningful service, academic curriculum, and critical reflection.

The Service Learning Program is dedicated in providing experiential learning opportunities for all of our TTU students. If you are interested in learning more about service-learning, please contact Irene Arellano, Service Learning Coordinator, at 742-0133, or via email at irene.arellano@ttu.edu.
Have you Heard About the New Instructional Diagnosis?

In a previous newsletter, we described the benefits of engaging in a Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (see the piece “What are Your Students Thinking?” at http://www.tlpd.ttu.edu/home/Newsletter/TLPDCWinter-Spring2012Newsletter.pdf). Since then, we have modified the process of gathering detailed feedback from students to make it more streamlined, less time-consuming during class, and easier for instructors to interpret.

The process still involves a trained consultant visiting with your students, inviting them to respond anonymously and in writing to three open-ended questions: 1) What do you like most about this class, and what is helping you learn?; 2) What do you like least about the class, and what is not helping you learn?; and 3) What suggestions for improvement do you have? However, instead of moving on to collect small group and class responses, the consultant then asks students to indicate which of their comments in response to each question is most important to them. The consultant follows by categorizing the commentary, parsing the data, and creating graphic representations of the major issues identified by the students. The consultant will complete the process by meeting with you to review the feedback and think through any potential changes to your teaching.

While the former process required at least 20 minutes of class time, this new and improved process only requires approximately 10 minutes for completion during class. Instructors who have gone through the process have found it invaluable for collecting detailed student commentary and pinpointing the elements of their teaching that need the most attention.

If you are interested in requesting an Instructional Diagnosis for your class, please call the TLPDC at 742-0133 or email micah.m.logan@ttu.edu or allison.p.boye@ttu.edu.

Teaching Tips from Faculty Spotlight Honoree Dr. Janice Killian (Professor, School of Music)

- No matter how well you presented information, if they didn’t learn it, you didn’t teach it.
- A professor’s personal subject matter knowledge is vital, but teaching is not about demonstrating what you know; it’s about analyzing how they learn what you know.
- Mentoring is a life-long process lasting far beyond the years that doctoral students are in your formal classes.
- Inspire change. We are teaching the leaders who will have a chance to fix the system. Our job is to prepare them to accept that challenge.
- Believe that your students will be able to know more than you do and treat them accordingly; otherwise human knowledge is a decrescendo model.

Instructional Design News

One TLPDC goal is to facilitate student success and retention in online classes, and the Instructional Design (ID) Team strives to achieve this goal by creating resources regarding best practices for online instruction. Currently, we are working diligently to create an Online Course Rubric that can be used to evaluate online course design. This rubric is just one way the ID Team plans to provide immediate support for online course design and development. It is our intention that this rubric will become a useful resource for all TTU faculty teaching online. We look forward to sharing the many ways we believe this tool will help in providing recommendations for improvements to TTU online courses. Look for it soon on our redesigned Teaching Online website.

Texas Tech has also begun a migration process to BlackBoard-Learn 9.1, and the TLPDC is pleased to announce our training schedule for the spring and summer. We will offer two training sessions: Basic Training consists of the Getting Started, Adding Content, and Exploring the Grade Center modules. Assignments and Tests Training walks you through creating, managing, and grading with the Assignment and Test Tool Modules. Please note that the Basic Training is the prerequisite to the Assignments and Tests Training. To enroll for the training, please go to www.tlpd.ttu.edu/events.

As always, the ID Team is happy to assist you with your online course design and development. Contact us to request an instructional designer to work with you by email: tlpdc.id@ttu.edu.
I believe the learning process is a journey, and as such, teachers must also dedicate themselves to discovering, integrating, and assessing new teaching techniques. I believe we should strive to continuously improve, which requires evaluating the effectiveness of our courses and making adjustments to better accomplish the learning objectives. In many ways, we “practice” teaching just as others “practice” medicine or law. We are never “done” as a teacher; I know I can always make adjustments or improvements. I would like to share some advice about what you could do to join me in the pursuit to become an exceptional educator.

- Learn your students’ names. I realize this may be overwhelming for large enrollment courses, but that doesn’t mean you can’t try. Learning names helps each student feel like a valued member of the class.
- During the semester, make notes on the syllabus about what lectures and activities need to be improved, where assignments could be added or removed, and what information needs to be updated. Believe me, by the time the class rolls around again, you will have forgotten to make many of those changes unless you document them now.

- Conduct informal student evaluations of your courses at least once each semester. This gives you an opportunity to have students answer specific questions that are more course specific than what is on the university evaluation form. You will need someone else to administer, collect, and store these responses until after grades post so students can provide honest feedback. I have found these comments are crucial to the refinement and improvement of the courses I teach.
- Seek opportunities to improve your teaching skills. The TLPDC offers many workshops and seminars each year that keep me energized to teach and provide practical advice I can incorporate in my own classes on topics such as service-learning, Blackboard, grading writing, and many more.
- Expect and communicate high standards for your students’ work in your classes. One way to do this is to provide detailed rubrics and meticulous feedback on major assignments. I believe students appreciate knowing that the effort and time they put into writing a paper, designing a website, or conducting a literature review will be rewarded with timely and constructive feedback.
- Share your enthusiasm for the topic you are teaching. I hope we all entered our chosen professions because we are intrigued, even passionate, about the subject area. Students need to know that you enjoy what you do so they can enjoy learning about the topic.