

Teaching



TTU

The Newsletter of the
Teaching, Learning,
and Professional
Development Center

Office of the Provost,
Division of Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs

Information about the pursuit of good teaching at
Texas Tech University and beyond. **Winter/Spring 2012**

A Letter from our Director

When you think of spring, do your thoughts turn to dust storms? After last year's record drought and Lubbock's spotlight in the national news with our very own haboob, many of us are more focused on weather than ever before. But let's hope that our teaching isn't as dry and dusty as a West Texas day can be. Consider attending one of our Spring workshops to refresh yourself with something new like how to change up your presentations with Prezi, talk about balancing career and family life, or consider ways to motivate students. These are just a handful of our workshop topics -- a quick look at our website and spring schedule will show many more options.

Another great reason to stop by the TLPDC is to meet our newest employee, Veronica Valenzuela. Veronica is a new instructional designer ready to assist faculty and instructors in creating online instructional materials. Veronica is a self-proclaimed "gadget nerd" and she's already been a great addition to our team!

As the TLPDC continues to grow into our new mission and name, we look forward to embracing a more holistic professional development approach and continuing to offer teaching and learning resources while adding new resources and programs for department chairs, staff members, and more. Look for good things to come from the TLPDC.

We hope to see you soon at the TLPDC! Try a new workshop, meet Veronica, and just say "hi!"

~ Suzanne

The TLPDC is thrilled to highlight 5 faculty members for the 2012 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 their teaching philosophy and some of their favorite teaching ideas with readers.

Stay tuned for more in our fall 2012 issue!

Clockwise from top left: Dr. Jerry Dwyer, Dr. Nathan Collie,
Dr. Elizabeth Trejos-Castillo, Dr. Joaquin Gonzales, Dr. Jacki Fitzpatrick



**Balancing Career
& Family Life**
Dr. Alan Korinek, TTUHSC
Feb. 21st, 12:30 - 1:30
TLPDC 151

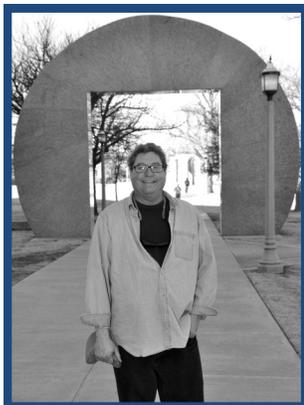
**The 8th Annual
Advancing Teaching
& Learning Conference,**
Dr. Marilla Svinicki, UT Austin
Feb. 27th, 10:00—4:00
Student Union Building

**Quality Matters Training:
Improving Your
Online Course**
Mary Wells
April 13th, 8:00—12:00
TLPDC 151

**Are Students Learning
Enough in College?**
Dr. Gerry Dizinno,
UT San Antonio
April 19th, 12:00—1:30
TLPDC 151

Spring Guest
Speakers

TLPDC 2012 Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Nathan Collie, Associate Professor, Biology



“A teaching philosophy is not what you always do. It’s what you aspire to accomplish. I want to create a learning environment that is engaging and effective, because students who are self-compelled to attend class every day, who work together to solve problems, or who discover their own answers will learn effectively. That requires a classroom that is not headed by a drone that repeats lecture information. I used to be that person until I started attending events and workshops regularly at the TLTC (now the TLPDC). My goal is a classroom that must be worthy of visiting in person: it is a safe, civil environment, full of teacher-student interactions, timely and useful information for their future careers, where voices are encouraged to contribute to understanding a problem or to posing a new one. How does one know exactly when learning has been accomplished effectively? You have to instill a culture of self-assessment within your students and that begins with you. You must become their model for how one improves, by candid (often painful) self-analysis. Display your tools for metacognition: here is your starting point; how can I improve my performance; what is my plan to do so; what did I accomplish; iterate! Frankly, you learn how to teach better by listening and learning from your colleagues that wish to improve their own teaching: There’s an app for that—the TLPDC!”

Teaching Tip from Dr. Nathan Collie:

If you teach a large class and use Blackboard, you are certain to receive dozens of emails asking the same question. Ever wish good students would answer other student questions (with your approval, of course)? Now, there’s a website called Piazza.com with an academic social media flavor that does that and much more, all while allowing you complete control over content. Shy students can ask the whole class a question anonymously and get the answer rapidly, from peers or from you, because everyone is alerted to the question via Tech email. Rather than distracting students from Blackboard (or other course websites), Piazza draws attention to your content on Blackboard. Try it out; it’s free!

Time for TEACH Program Applications!

The Spring semester is upon us – that means it will soon be time for new applications to the 2012-2013 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, project work with a faculty mentor, workshop attendance, and the development of a professional teaching portfolio as well as a teaching and learning project. Fellows selected for this program are paid a \$500 stipend per semester for their active participation. Outstanding Fellows who complete the program might even have the opportunity to teach a class with the Honors College!

Applications should be submitted online via the TEACH website at www.tlpd.ttu.edu/teach/apply. Please note that the system will not open for applications until **March, 2012**, and the deadline for complete applications is **Friday, April 13th, 2012**. 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 details. 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.boy@ttu.edu, or any member of the TEACH staff.

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

HAVE YOU TRIED THIS?

Looking for an easy, low-risk way to get your students thinking and talking? Try a **Think-Pair-Share**:

1. Provide students with a thought-provoking question (“What do you think might be the cause of...?” “What are some examples of...?” “What are some of the pros and cons of...?”)
2. Give them a minute or two to think about or write down their own ideas or responses.
3. Ask students to turn to a partner and discuss their responses together for another few minutes.
4. Ask students to share their discussions with the class.

The think-pair-share can help shy students participate in smaller groups, and gives students the opportunity to process the question and “try out” their responses in a safe environment before speaking to the entire class.

Service Learning News

The Service Learning Program is excited to announce there are now 77 official "S"-designated service learning courses at Texas Tech University. These courses include the undergraduate and graduate level as well as the Law School.

There were 15 courses submitted during the 2011 Fall Semester, which is the highest number of applications in a given semester. All of the courses were officially given the "S" designation by the Review Committee. The official "S"-designation signifies that the service learning courses provide rigorous and enhanced learning by interconnecting meaningful service, academic curriculum, and critical reflection.

One of the most exciting additions is the fact that there are 10 new Law School "S"-designated courses. The Law School courses vary from Health Care & Bioethics Mediation Clinic to the Family Law Housing Clinic. 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. Clearly, the Law faculty have embraced the pedagogy and are committed to the philosophy and practice of service learning.

The Service Learning Program is dedicated to 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.

Teaching Tip from Dr. Joaquin Gonzalez

Pose a question at the beginning of class and teach with focused repetition.

Call us at 742-0133

Find us online at www.tlpc.ttu.edu

Visit us in the University Library, 1st floor, North wing

Registration is Open
for
The Eighth Annual

**Advancing Teaching and
Learning Conference**

2.27.2012

Texas Tech Student Union Building

The Teaching, Learning and Professional Development Center is pleased to announce that registration for the 8th Annual Advancing Teaching and Learning Conference is now open! This year's keynote presentation will feature Dr. Marilla D. Svinicki, Professor of Educational Psychology and Chair of the Learning, Cognition, Instruction and Motivation area in the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Texas.

With a focus on student motivation, eight other conference sessions offered will provide insight into how our student's think and learn as well as practical ways in which faculty and staff can facilitate student learning. In addition to the keynote presentation, the conference will include presentations such as "I Can Show It to You Better Than I Can Explain It to You: Exemplifying Excellence in the Large Lecture Classroom," and "Mad Libs, Cornell, and Fill-in-the-Blank Slides: Strategies to Encourage Students to take Good Notes." Presenters include faculty members from Texas Tech, San Jacinto College, Concordia University and Abilene Christian University.

To register or find more information about the conference, including the complete conference schedule, please go to <http://www.tlpc.ttu.edu/content/asp/conferences/atalc>. Registration is free for members of the TTU community.

If you have any questions, please contact **Troy Lescher** (troy.lescher@ttu.edu) or **Micah Logan** (micah.m.logan@ttu.edu) by email or at 806-742-0133.

Instructional Design News

The TLPDC instructional design team is pleased to welcome two new people to assist faculty. Veronica Valenzuela joins us as a full-time instructional designer. She comes to us with a master's degree in Instructional Technology from Texas Tech! You will know Veronica by her ready smile, her expertise, and her great customer focus! We also welcome Ninghua Han, an instructional design intern for the spring semester from the Instructional Technology program in the College of Education. We will be adding another full-time instructional designer to our team soon to better serve the TTU community. Our team is busy assisting faculty partners in developing online courses for fall, and developing several online resources for all faculty. In April, the team will travel to Dallas for the Texas Distance Learning Association conference. Visit our website in May for a report of what they learn! http://www.tlpc.ttu.edu/content/asp/Distance_Learning/about.asp

What are Your Students Thinking?

Do you ever wonder what your students are thinking and wish you could get some honest feedback (that's more than just two words scribbled on a scantron at the end of the semester)? The consultants at the TLPDC are here to help you find some answers by conducting a **Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID)** with your students. An SGID is a method for collecting anonymous feedback from students in which a trained consultant will come to your class and visit with your students, asking them to comment on three questions: 1) What do you like most about the class, what is helping you learn?; 2) What do you like the least about the class, what is not helping you learn?; and, 3) What suggestions for improvement do you have for the instructor? To ensure thoughtful and thorough feedback from the students, the consultant will need between 20-30 minutes to complete the SGID.

After compiling the students' responses, the consultant will meet with you to discuss the feedback and help you think through the comments as well as brainstorm possible ways to address issues brought up by students. In addition to providing you with insightful and honest feedback, this is an excellent opportunity for you to demonstrate to your students that you value their input as well as their learning. Students sincerely appreciate it when they feel as though their voice is heard.

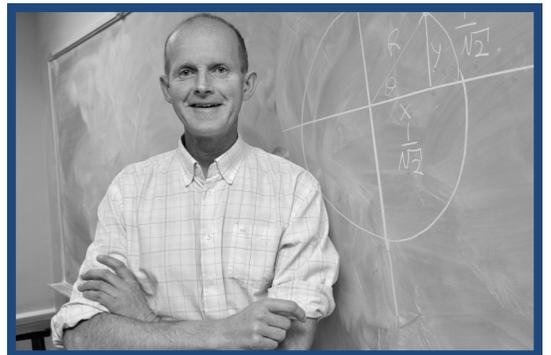
If you are interested in having an SGID conducted in your class, please call the TLPDC at 742-0133 or email micah.m.logan@ttu.edu or allison.p.boyce@ttu.edu and we'll be happy to help you.



TLPDC 2012 Faculty Spotlight:

Dr. Jerry Dwyer, Associate Professor, Mathematics and Statistics

"I consider teaching to be an exciting intellectual challenge to find multiple ways of developing student understanding, mostly through a combination of the following strategies.



Group work

Students enjoy group work. They enjoy working with one another and learning from one another. They have more time to assess a problem and grapple with it than in a traditional lecture setting. I also find it much more enjoyable to walk around and discuss problems with students rather than just write on the board. This leads to an important change in class preparation. The emphasis is no longer on learning the material and preparing an impeccable set of notes for classroom delivery. The emphasis now is on developing diverse ways of presenting material and motivating students to work with the material. It is my hope that the classroom becomes an interactive learning laboratory and not just a location for transcription.

Service learning

In a service learning environment, students perform some service in the community which complements and enhances their classroom learning. In my pre-service teachers' classes this is best implemented by having students work as tutors in local K-12 schools where they gain increased understanding of elementary school mathematics through explaining the concepts to younger students. College students like this option and all participants report increased learning as a result of service learning activities.

Reduced syllabus

I firmly believe that quality of learning is far more important than quantity. That means there should be no rush to "cover" all of the material. It is better to fully understand two chapters than to have read (but not understood) five chapters. It seems to me that very few students understand as much as we think they do. From that realization I make an effort to keep the syllabus as short as possible and only proceed to the next topic when I think that a large majority of students have some grasp of the material. I think that students enjoy going slowly and really enjoy the fact that they understand as they go along. The amount of material covered is less but the students should leave the classroom with a greater sense of satisfaction than if they had covered several topics with limited understanding. A related point is the observation that a student question in class is not time consuming; rather it is an opportunity for increased learning.

Doing math in class

Rather than preparing detailed notes I often leave a problem untouched until I am in the classroom. Then I work through the problem with student assistance where possible. This may be risky if I find I am unable to complete the problem in time. But the big advantage is the fact that students see me "doing" math on the board. They don't see an artificial canned presentation but an actual mathematician doing math. Surely this is a nice opportunity to display our real life work and passion."

Teaching Pearls from Dr. Jerry Dwyer

Focus on
quality rather
than quantity

Incorporate
multiple instruction/
facilitation strategies
in the classroom and
beyond

Think deeply
about how to
assess student
learning

Do mathematics
in the classroom
rather than
present
mathematics

Think deeply
about what you
want your
students to
learn

Read the
literature
about
teaching

Blackboard: A Change is Coming...

Texas Tech will soon begin the process of migrating from Blackboard CE 8 to Blackboard Learn 9.1. The migration to the new platform will take place over the course of several semesters and the TLPDC is pleased to announce that we will be coordinating the migration of all existing Blackboard courses. Blackboard Learn 9.1 will be available to TTU faculty and instructors as of Spring 2013 and all courses will be converted to the new platform by May 2013. TTU will continue to run and support Blackboard CE 8 through Spring 2013.

To help facilitate the migration process, the TLPDC will work with a pilot group of 30-40 veteran Blackboard faculty members who will help to troubleshoot as well as identify and explore features of the new platform. The pilot group will begin Blackboard Learn 9.1 training this summer and will implement their new courses in the fall. The TLPDC will begin offering Blackboard Learn 9.1 training for all faculty and instructors in Fall 2012, at which time we will continue to offer training and support for Blackboard CE 8. All new 2013 Blackboard courses will be launched in Blackboard Learn 9.1.

While we know that a course management system migration can be a challenging process, we are confident that you will be pleased with the new features offered in Blackboard Learn 9.1. Stay tuned to future versions of the newsletter as we will highlight some of the most helpful and unique tools of Blackboard Learn 9.1.

TLPDC 2012 Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Joaquin Gonzales, Assistant Professor, Health, Exercise and Sport Sciences

"The value of a *clear message* cannot be understated. It is my belief that in today's world of rapid new discoveries, a *clear message* is rather hard to receive amidst multiple sources, cautions, and alternative or developing views. Flip the coin and you will find that it is even harder to deliver a *clear message*. For example, what is the take-home message from the following physiological event during exercise? Muscle arterioles dilate in response to skeletal muscle contractions causing blood flow to increase to active muscle for delivery of nutrients and oxygen for continued contractions. The increased flow of blood places a tangential force on the inner surface of the vessel wall stimulating production and release of substances that maintain a vessel free of adhering factors. In this short description, an elaborate lecture can be given on any of the following: how skeletal muscle contracts, fuel sources during exercise, hemodynamics, and cellular responses to physical stimuli. As a relatively new faculty member, I am continually adapting my teaching philosophy with the aim of becoming a more effective teacher. This semester I plan to take a simplistic approach – one lecture, one *clear message*. This may be difficult considering the gross amount of information needed to be covered during the semester. However, rather than focus on details that are already well-described in textbooks but are often glossed over in the classroom placing students at risk of being overwhelmed and confused, my objective will be to teach around an individual concept. In the case of the physiological event described above, I would pose the question, "what are underlying mechanisms for improved vascular health with exercise training?" With the focus point announced, it now becomes *clear* that the take-home *message* is the importance of exercise-induced blood flow on vascular function. This approach is not novel, but may help to direct students' attention and thoughts on the intended topic of discussion during class."



Rigorous courses can take students (especially transfer students) by surprise. On the first class day, I sketch out physical roadmap for success in my class. It includes the curves in the road (quizzes, projects, and final exam) and the speed bumps (e.g., ignoring problem sets) that prevent or slow success. Fewer surprises mean better grades are possible.

Teaching Tip from
Dr. Nathan Collie

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