



The Excellence in
Teaching at NGCSU
Newsletter

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2001-02 Faculty Retreat: Leadership Across the Curriculum

Plans are underway for the NGCSU Fourth Annual Faculty Retreat, scheduled for Friday, January 25th and Saturday, January 26th at the Black Mountain Lodge. This year's retreat is earlier than those of previous years, to move the retreat, beginning in Fall 2002, to Fall Semester, when faculty members appear to have fewer conflicts.

The retreat theme is Leadership Across the Curriculum. Participants will examine existing leadership practices in our classrooms and develop plans for leadership programs at NGCSU. While reservations for the Lodge are limited, all faculty are invited to participate.

Mark your calendars for January 25th and 26th, and watch the next issue of *The Teacher* for more retreat details.

Research and Service: Tools for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

by Wayne Morris

I attended the Third Annual Teaching Excellence at NGCSU Faculty Retreat held earlier this year at Black Mountain Lodge in Dahlonega. Because of a partial time conflict with a biological conference in New Orleans, I was able to participate only in sessions on the last day of this two-day event. In those sessions, we discussed how we apply the scholarship of teaching and learning in the classroom. In our breakout session, faculty in the School of Natural and Health Sciences shared ideas and learned about different approaches to student learning used by our departments. Afterwards, we reconvened with the larger group for lively discussion about this topic. Given the limited timeframe, many of us felt the need for further reflection on the scholarship of teaching and learning, in addition to what we were currently doing with our courses.

North Georgia College & State University has a mission statement centering on three main areas: teaching, scholarship (research), and service. The more I thought about this, the more I realized that they are tightly interwoven. In many ways, they actually become one entity. Research and service can be viewed as tools to enhance teaching and learning. When used with students in mind, they can provide them with many opportunities.

Because faculty time is limited, the research and service branches of the NGCSU mission should complement teaching. Consistent with the guidelines for promotion to associate professor and tenure, faculty should demonstrate strengths in at least two of the three major areas, one of which must be teaching. Instructors in various departments should look to their strengths where research and service are concerned and contribute toward the overall health of their departments. Some will function best in service activities and other individuals in research. Just as we teach our students to integrate what they have learned in various disciplines at the college level, we should remind ourselves to integrate teaching, scholarship (research), and service to facilitate student learning.

Writing Intensive Courses and Courses with an Oral Communication Component

Many instructors on this campus are directly including students in scholarly activities by teaching writing intensive courses and courses with an oral communication component. As we all know, a student earning a four-year degree from this institution must take two writing intensive courses, one of which is in the student's major field of study, and also at least one course in which oral presentations to peers and mentors constitute at minimum 15% of the class grade. Students in the writing intensive courses prepare their assignments as if they are submitting their work to peer-reviewed journals or other appropriate outlets in their academic disciplines. This gives them a "taste" of what professional life after NGCSU will be like while strengthening their writing and research abilities. Some faculty at NGCSU,

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Please send comments or related articles via campus mail (attention: Donna Gessell, Department of Language and Literature) or via e-mail rdptl@ngcsu.edu for possible inclusion in the next issue of *The Teacher*.

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including Drs. Donna Gessell and Irene Kokkala, have shown that learning communities involving two “very different” disciplines (humanities and sciences) can focus on enhancing writing and editing skills of students engaged in these subjects. Results of the hard work of teachers of writing intensive courses are obvious: writing scores of NGCSU students remain near or at the top when compared to other University System of Georgia institutions.

Likewise, students enrolled in courses designated as having an oral communication component often prepare presentations in the style of those given at professional meetings; some are specifically designed for delivery at those meetings. The students’ technological literacy is often raised to higher levels while working on these projects. Several of my colleagues, including Drs. Mark Davis, Tom Fox, and Irene Kokkala, and I incorporate undergraduate oral presentations in our extended field experience courses. These courses include the optional corequisite field studies in ecology, marine biology, and plant taxonomy. The classes travel to the Okefenokee Swamp, Sapelo Island, Georgia, and Cape San Blas and the Apalachicola National Forest, Florida, respectively. Each field trip is enhanced with oral presentations by the participating students. Before the excursions, each student chooses a topic to research for presentation while in the field. The student develops an outline and visual aids to supplement the presentation. Delivery of information is in the form of a “mock” scientific meeting with an *in situ* perspective. The presentation is evaluated by peers and the faculty member using standard criteria established by the class. Feedback from students indicates that this approach benefits their development as educators, as scientists, and as individuals.

Independent Study/Undergraduate Research and Seminar Courses

In addition to the classroom setting, various departments on campus give students opportunities to learn by offering independent study/undergraduate research and seminar courses. Although faculty are not financially compensated for these activities, projects carried out in this manner can be very rewarding. They are excellent ways in which faculty and students can collaborate in the area of scholarship. Much of the current scientific research is done by teams of investigators, so this collaboration is a simulation of professional life after NGCSU. For instructors in the Biology Department, these studies are often conducted during the summer months when there is a little more time to define and investigate a problem. Dedicated students in our department under the direction of Drs. Frank Corotto, Mark Davis, Irene Kokkala, James Parker, and me have presented their work orally at the annual NGCSU Honors Day event and also at professional meetings; some have published their research in peer-reviewed journals and in our very own *NGCSU Journal of Undergraduate Research*. Students with whom I have worked have conducted floristic studies of specific sites ranging from calcareous

bluffs to granite outcrops to habitats typical of north Georgia at Pine Valley Recreation Area. Students have provided data to the proper authorities on rare, threatened, and endangered plants and also on invasive plant species as a result of their efforts, thus combining the scholarship and service components of the NGCSU mission. It is exciting to watch students mature professionally via an independent study/undergraduate research project.

Service Activities

Instructors at NGCSU are actively engaged in service activities and are especially encouraged to be involved in those that directly enhance teaching and learning. Because service activities are so varied across campus, I will draw upon some personal experiences in this area. In my plant taxonomy extended field experience course mentioned earlier, students and I have surveyed the flora and provided data on previously unrecorded species for the Florida state park system; in return, officials of St. Joseph Peninsula State Park have given students discounted rates on lodging accommodations. In my sophomore-level botany and freshman-level biology classes, I give students an optional assignment. The assignment is to participate in a “Privet Pull” event, a service learning activity organized by the Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council, in conjunction with Rivers Alive, Georgia’s annual river cleanup day. Before this event, students research the identification, biology, and control of Chinese privet as well as several other top ten exotic pest plants including kudzu and Japanese honeysuckle. After conducting literature searches and taking part in the event, students write essays about biological pollution. It is especially rewarding to see students involved in public service while they are learning course content.

Research and Service Activities

There are a number of research and service activities in which faculty engage that at first glance do not seem to affect or include students, but after close examination even these activities can have an impact on students at NGCSU. Many faculty members obtain grants to conduct independent research; and quite often, the work involves travel. Again, I draw upon personal experience here since this subject covers a broad spectrum across campus. Photographic images (and specimens, artifacts, etc.) gained from these experiences abroad and also publications resulting from the work can be used to enhance classroom discussions. The contacts made may also prove useful to students as they begin searching for permanent jobs and professional or graduate schools. By serving on the boards of two statewide botanical organizations, I have been asked to assist or serve as chair of the committees establishing undergraduate and graduate research grant programs for students conducting their work in Georgia. As an official cooperator for the Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance (GPCA), an umbrella organization including representatives from federal, state, and private agencies, I am invited to quarterly meetings to participate in discussions of Georgia’s priority plant conservation projects. While attending these meetings, I am always looking for potential undergraduate research projects that support the missions of

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Mentoring: A Gift for Professional Growth

Excerpts from an article with the same title by Marilyn S. Lary

“Mentoring is a professionally supportive relationship between an experienced, successful mid-career employee and a beginner. It is a time-honored method of encouraging new talent, of sharing expertise and connections, and of providing rapid, upward mobility. . . . Mentoring helps to initiate/cement a professional network which influences progress, responsibilities, exposure, and growth. . . .

“Mentoring has been most successful for those individuals who have *found each other*. Contributing to a good mentoring experience are the expectations, personalities, backgrounds, and perspectives of the two individuals. But the immediate interest of each individual was probably NOT that of getting nor of becoming a mentor. More likely, there was a problem to be solved, advice to be sought/given; directions to be acquired/provided. The interaction of these two individuals, on both professional and personal levels, evolved into a mentoring relationship. Mentoring, by definition, requires a great degree of trust, a healthy respect for likenesses and differences, and a commitment to a shared vision. It also requires an individual who is unthreatened. . . .

“The mentoring experience, however, is neither automatic nor trouble-free. In addition to providing professional benefits for both participants, mentoring relationships are, for the most part, also based on sincere affection for each other. Affection is not necessary but mutual respect is critical. Such relationships require the work and commitment of each individual. . . .

“The mentoring relationship is not always totally positive and beneficial for its participants. Human relationships are fraught with pitfalls, difficulties, and disappointment. This one is no different.

“Surely, mentoring is a desirable relationship. But it rests on mutual respect, shared interests, and dedicated commitment. It does not bloom in assigned, prescribed environments.”

An Invitation to Enter a Mentoring Relationship

Understanding the responsibilities and possible benefits of a mentoring relationship as well as its potential pitfalls, NGCSU faculty members are invited to formalize mentoring relationships existing outside of departments, through the Teaching and Learning website. Watch your email for further information.

Mentoring for All Seasons and All Reasons

by Donna Gessell

“We all need mentors: at all times of our lives and for all our various activities. Currently, my mentor is someone who is teaching me to age gracefully.”

These words encapsulate my view on mentoring. In fact, they were spoken by my graduate school mentor, Bill Siebenschuh, after I told him what a wonderful mentor I have had at NGCSU. Bill served as my Dissertation Director, chosen for many reasons, but particularly because of his expansive sense of humor. For instance, when his class reads Book IX of Paradise Lost, he provides each student a Golden Delicious apple so that

all can share Eve’s moment.

In addition to providing occasionally the much-needed witty marginal note amongst a myriad of content and stylistic comments in chapter drafts, Bill proved a mentor beyond my scholarship. Not only did he guide my teaching and grading practices, he taught me life lessons: the need to laugh and to swim, the joy of a happy family life, and the pleasure of pursuing the serendipitous. While I slogged through my dissertation, he co-authored the biography of a Tibetan. Other mentors now guide my activities, but Bill’s words enhance my 18th Century class, and the postcard that he

sent last year on his sabbatical trip to Lhasa has its place of honor. Indeed, he is aging quite gracefully.

Profile of a Good Mentor *by Toni Bellon*

My favorite mentor knows to listen without interruption. She doesn’t mind if I vent about the injustices of the world and keeps a ready supply of tissues on her desk. The best mentor is “with it”. She asks about my well-being just when I need someone to care. This inspiring mentor is never judgmental or prescriptive. She asks gentle questions and shares her own pitfalls. What does a good mentor look like? She looks like Judy Long.

Leaders in Instructional Technology Program

by Irene Kokkala

The Faculty Development Advisory Council (FDAC) is in the process of developing this year's program funded by the University System of Georgia Connecting Teachers with Technology initiative. This program will provide equipment funds, technical support, and instructional design assistance to faculty members who are interested in implementing changes in their courses. The Leaders in Instructional Technology Program (LITP) will provide the opportunity to faculty members to develop applications of instructional technologies for their courses and programs and to become catalysts for change in their departments.

The program will include a series of lectures, presentations, and workshops to the wider faculty community on issues of technology, intellectual property, assessment, and copyright principles. Faculty members will be given the opportunity to apply for one of the eight positions also funded by this program.



Each participant will receive an equipment grant. The LITP participants will be selected during the fall semester 2001 and will meet as a group regularly during the spring semester 2002, attending the lectures, workshops, and presentations sponsored by the Faculty Development Advisory Council, many of which will be open to all NGCSU faculty. During the fall semester 2002 all participants will present their projects to the NGCSU faculty in a series of seminars.

A successful applicant need not have previous experience with instructional technologies yet must be willing to develop a significant application of instructional technology.

Each applicant should fill out an application form and send it to the FDAC as directed in the application. Application forms will be available at the homepage of FDAC under Campus Resources.

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both NGCSU and GPCA. Fortunately, last year, a student, a colleague in the Biology Department, and I were given permission to collaborate on a prey capture study of a montane population of the purple pitcher plant, a rare carnivorous species in Georgia, while monitoring and managing this safeguarding site. Data collected on the taxonomic groups captured by the plants have been shared with GPCA, and the student presenting this work at the recent Georgia Academy of Science meeting received the award for best student paper. Collaboration can truly be the key to success.

An Invitation

One of the goals of the NGCSU faculty retreats and this newsletter is to provide a forum for the scholarship of teaching and learning. Many of you teach writing intensive courses and courses with oral communication components, and undoubtedly you have unique approaches to teaching and learning in your respective disciplines. I encourage you to participate and share what you do.

DPTL's Note—How are you promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning, particularly in the area of student research? TheTeacher will publish your activities and reflections.

Excellence in Teaching Awards 2001

Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize faculty members for teaching excellence in the classroom in a variety of categories. These awards are a part of NGCSU's ongoing support of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Bringing Scholarship into the Classroom
Ahmad Ghafarian

Incorporating Oral Presentations
Sara Steele

Incorporating Writing
India Podsen

Promoting Active Learning
Carol Simmons

Relating to Students
Judy O'Neal

Technology Utilization
Barbara Ann Tronsgard

Retired "Master Teacher"
Elsa Ann Gaines

Collaboration
Barry Friedman, Toni Barnett, & Barbara Ann Tronsgard



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