

## **Brown Bag Lunch Discussion Summaries**

### **Teaching Composition as a Social Process**

#### **Summary of April 12th, 2010 Discussion**

Led by Bryan Peters, Instructor of English, a group of eight faculty and staff members discussed Bruce McComiskey's theory of Teaching Composition as a Social Process. Bryan explained that according to McComiskey, there are three levels of composing: Textual, Rhetorical, and Discursive. At the Discursive level, the audience is the community and culture. When teaching writing, instructors should give attention to all three levels of composition. Just as composition is a process, the formulation of subjectivities is a process. Encouraging students to see composition as power facilitates their understanding of the world and their ability to change the world.

### **Service Learning in the Aristotelian Tradition**

#### **Summary of March 12th, 2010 Discussion**

Thirteen faculty and staff members met to discuss the connection between Service Learning and Aristotle. Through the use of Service Learning pedagogy, faculty give students the opportunity to apply what they learn to real needs in the community. Aristotle taught that moral excellence comes from the habit of doing just acts. Service Learning gets students acting on what they've learned in the classroom. It was also mentioned that Service Learning is one way to provide students with High Impact Educational Experiences, as defined by the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

### **What Students Should Know**

#### **Summary of November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Discussion**

On Wednesday, Nov. 18th, a group met to discuss What Students Should Know. The group shared ways to help students develop essential knowledge and skills so that Jefferson graduates will effectively function in society.

### **Dealing with Student Incivility**

#### **Summary of October 23rd, 2009 Discussion**

On October 23, 2009, a group of fourteen faculty members, staff and administrators shared ideas about how to handle student incivility. Much of the discussion revolved around students' use of technology in the classroom for reasons unrelated to the course. Students texting and using laptop computers were specifically mentioned as student behaviors that disrupt the learning process. Discussion of disrespectful and aggressive student attitudes led to a discussion of maintaining campus safety. The group agreed that faculty should not hesitate to seek assistance from others, such as the appropriate division chair, when dealing with student incivility. The group also suggested that administrative support of faculty responses to student incivility needs to be put in writing. A suggestion was made to add information to the Student Handbook about informal actions an instructor may take. It was also suggested that texting and other behaviors involving technology be specifically mentioned in the Student Handbook as examples of behavioral misconduct that interferes with the mission of the college.

### **Eliminating "Time-Wasters" in Your Online Course**

#### **Summary of September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Discussion**

On Friday, September 18th, a group of nine faculty members got together for lunch and a discussion of 13 Time Saving Tips for Online Instructors. Much of the conversation revolved around the suggestions for using discussion boards, rather than e-mail, to communicate with students for all communication other than personal and FERPA related information.

### **“Generation S” Brown Bag Lunch**

#### **Summary of April 24th, 2009 Discussion**

A group of seven faculty and staff members met on April 24, 2009 to discuss ways to foster a culture of civic engagement and service here at Jefferson College. The discussion began with faculty sharing the ways that they have already encouraged students to meet the needs of the community. Service Learning projects and student assignments that reflect the characteristics of authentic assessment have been used to encourage student civic engagement and service. Several suggestions for increasing civic engagement were made: 1) Create a committee made up of faculty, staff and students to promote service and civic engagement, 2) Hold an annual volunteer day, 3) Continue to promote the use of Service Learning pedagogy, 4) Formally include utilization of teaching strategies that promote civic engagement in the promotion and tenure process, 5) Publicize civic engagement activities in the Harbinger, 6) Award certificates to students for service to the community, and 7) Organize a Campus Watch program similar to Neighborhood Watch. The group also discussed the funds that are currently available from Missouri Campus Compact to promote civic engagement on campus.

### **Teaching Online: What Works?**

#### **Summary of March 13th, 2009 Discussion**

A group of 15 faculty and staff members met on March 13, 2009 to discuss techniques and strategies they have found to be successful for teaching online. Some of the successful strategies mentioned include the following:

1. Streamline the organization of information
2. Use upper text boxes
3. Repeat the same structure each week
4. Include a “Read Me First” for each week
5. On one sheet, list every assignment for the whole semester
6. Use a Drop Box
7. As part of an online orientation, require students to perform the skills they will use during the semester
8. Have a sidebar discussion board for students to help each other
9. Highly structure discussion board participation; specify quality and deadline requirements for initial posts and responses to classmates

10. Have postings due on Friday
11. Use controversy to get rich discussions
12. Create a discussion board for student biographies
13. Address online civility in the syllabus
14. In the first week, establish one-on-one contact with each student
15. Have a conference call midway in the course
16. To deal with the “I agree with so and so” posts, include a choice of topics or use small group discussion boards

The group also discussed whether it takes more time to teach online. It was mentioned that it depends on whether you've taught the course before and whether you've taught in online before. There is a lot of preparation the first time a course is taught online. Grading takes longer. The group briefly discussed problem students, students who do not participate in the course at all, and students who don't read instructor responses. Video blogging was mentioned as a technique that is new in teaching online. It was suggested that a STARS group for faculty who teach online might be helpful and that sessions on teaching online should be included as part of Adjunct Orientation and In-service Day in the fall.

### **Attendance Policies: What's yours?**

#### **Summary of February 27th, 2009 Discussion**

A group of 17 faculty members met on February 27 to share lunch and discuss attendance policies. Andrea St. John began the discussion with information from Kathleen Gabriel's book, *Teaching Unprepared Students*. Andrea pointed out the connection between regular attendance and student success and retention. Many of the faculty members stated that they award *class participation points*, rather than awarding points to students simply for attending class. Most of the faculty present stated that they do not differentiate between “excused” and “non-excused” absences, but instead set a maximum number of absences allowed, based somewhat on the Jefferson College attendance policy that faculty may prohibit a student from attending class if more than 15% of the total class time has been missed. There was consensus that no one attendance policy would work for all instructors, but a united front in terms of expecting professionalism from students would be helpful. It was noted that an expectation of professionalism equips students with skills that transfer to the workplace. Briefly, the group discussed attendance in online classes.

### **Getting Students Prepared for Class**

#### **Summary of October 31st, 2008 Discussion**

A group of 7 faculty members met on October 31st to share lunch and discuss getting students to prepare for class. Much of the discussion revolved around getting students to read the textbook prior to coming to class. Leslie Buck commented that it is important to explicitly tell students

why they need to prepare for class and to help them develop an action plan. During office hours, she meets with students one-on-one to play “Fantasy Gradebook.” She shows students what needs to be done to earn a grade of A, B, C, etc. She then asks the students, “Can you do this?” It was also noted that including higher order questions on tests encourages students to read before each class because they are then prepared for class activities that result in a well-developed understanding of course concepts. Sally Borgerson commented that providing students with a study guide encourages them to read the textbook. After a test, she relates missed test items to specific items on the student guide. This helps students to realize that using the study guide is important. Handouts on getting students to do the reading and getting students to prepare for class were available. The following strategies were mentioned:

- Use the book frequently in class

- Have quizzes (online or in-class) on the reading assignment, prior to lecturing on the topic

- Require citation of the textbook in writing assignments

- Include items on tests that come from textbook reading, but are not addressed in lecture

- Model in class how you want students to read the text

- Explain the purpose and value of assigned reading

- Give take-home exams

## **Bloom’s Taxonomy and the Misdirection of American Education**

### **Summary of April 25th, 2008 Discussion**

A group of twelve faculty members met in the Center for Teaching and Learning on Friday, April 25th to discuss the negative impact of the misapplication of Bloom’s taxonomy on K-12 education and the movement to similarly harm college-level classes by suggesting that there is little or no place in the college classroom for students to “know” or “understand” facts. Michael Booker briefly presented a synopsis of the ideas in his article, A Roof without Walls: Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy and the Misdirection of American Education. Andrea St. John commented that she agrees with Michael’s insights. The group agreed that students come to college without sufficient background knowledge, and attributed this phenomenon to the lack of emphasis on facts in American K-12 education. Leslie Buck commented that parental responsibility plays a role in K-12 students’ memorization of factual knowledge, with several people voicing agreement. Andrea and Susan noted that students without strong parental teaching at home will be left without alternatives, so public schools should not continue shifting the responsibility for mastery of facts to parents. Several people agreed. Bev Meyers noted the importance of being able to memorize. The group viewed a video segment addressing the new way math is taught in K-12 schools, which focuses on concepts rather than mastery of algorithms. Most faculty agreed with Susan Todd that the focus on higher order thinking has taken away from students’ ability to follow step-by-step directions, which is needed in many aspects of life. The push for the use of authentic assessment was briefly discussed. It was agreed that it is important to use a variety of assessments, including traditional assessments.

## **The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them**

### **Summary of April 4th, 2008 Discussion**

A group of 15 faculty members met on April 4th to share lunch and discuss points made by E.D. Hirsch in the book, The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them. Thanks to Andrea St.

John for creating a handout of the key points for the discussion. Also, thanks to Michael Booker for starting the conversation off by placing “anti-content bias” into the context of the history of K-12 education in the United States. Several faculty members voiced concern over the idea that content is irrelevant when teaching students to think critically, an idea which Hirsch claims is supported by U.S. colleges of Teacher Education. The value of Constructivist theory was debated. Susan Todd asked for clarification of the Constructivist Theory of Learning. Carolyn Elphingstone suggested that learning occurs when an individual meaningfully relates new information to previous experiences. Sandy Frey suggested that her interpretation of Constructivist Theory suggests that providing students with examples works better than explanations. Carolyn commented that practice is also needed. Consensus seemed to be reached that prior knowledge is critical to learning new information. Leslie Buck suggested that it is more beneficial to focus on the common ground we share regarding how students learn, rather than focusing on extremes. At the request of several faculty members, another brown bag lunch will be scheduled to continue the discussion of how best to facilitate learning for our students.

### **Adult Learning Theory**

#### **Summary of Friday, December 13th, 2007 Discussion**

Eight faculty members met to share lunch and discuss Adult Learning Theory. The discussion focused on the applicability of Malcolm Knowles’ work to Jefferson College students.

### **Define Student Success**

#### **Summary of Friday, September 21st, 2007 Discussion**

On Friday, September 21st, a group of approximately 15 college employees met to share lunch and thoughts on defining student success. Most in attendance agreed that student success is difficult to define and measure because student success is unique to each individual student. “No one size fits all.” One participant commented that student success is “what students define it as being.” Several participants shared examples of student successes that are not reflected in conventional measures of success. It was also noted that the successes of “limited goal achievers” are not accounted for in traditional measures of student success, such as retention, graduation and transfer rates. There was general agreement that it is important to have lofty goals to motivate students so that they succeed, but we must also have realistic expectations. The point was also made that if we focus on helping students to have daily successes, then we will have the retention, graduation and transfer rates that we want.

### **During the founding year (2006-2007) of the CTL, the following Brown Bag Lunches were held:**

The Role of Memorization in Higher Education, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Attendance Policies, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Ethical Development of College Students, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Capitalizing on Students' Prior Knowledge, March 28, 2007

Crisis in Higher Education?, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007