



Center for Teaching and Learning Newsletter

20 April 2016

Message from the Director



We come to the close of the first semester of existence for the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). I greatly appreciate the enthusiasm and encouragement of the UTD President, Provost, Deans, and faculty in launching the center and supporting CTL. Looking ahead, CTL will continue its successful graduate teaching certificate programs as well as its array of workshops and guest speakers. With respect to the latter, look for announcements in the early fall about major events on diversity in the classroom and technology in teaching. CTL also hopes to launch its website in late summer; this should provide a wealth of resources on improving teaching effectiveness and its assessment. New programs on tap include the Reflective Teaching Seminar (a teaching enhancement program for junior faculty), a certificate program for post-doctoral researchers who teach at UTD, and more. Best wishes and enjoy a productive summer. As always, feel free to call on the CTL if we can help in improving your teaching and associated student learning.

Upcoming Events

Faculty and Graduate TA Workshop on **Managing Student Crises at the End of the Semester** will be held from 12-1pm on Thursday, April 21 in Galaxy Rooms A & B (SU 2.602).

Teaching Tip

The question of whether or not to provide students with review sessions before exams is a controversial one. Faculty members tend to agree, however, that what students seem to be asking for (i.e., a short list of which topics to study for the exam) is not likely to help them learn. Maryellen Weimer recently shared some tips for improving exam review sessions on her blog:

1. Instead of telling students what will be on the test, have them tell you. They can do this in class by working in small groups to make a list that is then shared with the class, or online by submitting their lists to a discussion board.
2. Have small groups of students develop test questions that can then be answered by the rest of the class. You can give the class feedback on how well these questions are focusing on the kind of thinking that the exam items will assess.
3. Use sample short answer or essay questions to develop a set of possible answers that are of high, medium, and poor quality. Distribute these answers to students and have them identify which answers are better and why.

You can read more here: <http://bit.ly/1JEDJSB>

Research into Practice

In 2014, the UT Dallas Student Government approved the Comet Pledge: **As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.** It is not surprising that students endorsed this pledge nor that overwhelmingly, students say that cheating is wrong. What is surprising is that in spite of this, upwards of 70% of students at various universities report that they cheat anyway. Research on the effects of invoking self-awareness suggests a simple way to reduce the likelihood that students will cheat on an exam. In a series of experiments by Shu et al. (2012), students were given the opportunity to cheat by reporting incorrect information on several types of tasks. Students who signed their names at the top of the report were far less likely to cheat than were those who either signed at the bottom or did not sign at all. Asking for their signature reminds students of their values at a moment when their adherence to those values is about to be tested. Consider adding the Comet Pledge and asking students to sign it before beginning their exams.

You can read more here:

Shu, L. L., Mazar, N., Gino, F., Ariely, D., & Bazerman, M. H. (2012). Signing at the beginning makes ethics salient and decreases dishonest self-reports in comparison to signing at the end. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(38), 15197-15200.

What the Students Say—Part II

As we approach the end of the semester, students will be turning in final papers, assignments, take-home exams, and the like. Standard venues (during the regular class period) for submitting such work might not be applicable or convenient with classes ending and faculty availability more unpredictable in the last days of the semester and during final exam week. Students strongly prefer, and not merely at the end of the semester, flexibility in how and where they submit assignments. Specifically, they recognize the tried and true ways of handing instructors their work during class periods and office hours. Nevertheless, they would also appreciate instructors making available other means, in particular submission via dropboxes, eLearning sites, and email attachments; all of these provide some measure of confirmation and security, as well as a record of the date and time when the material was submitted. Many would also welcome the opportunity to put assignments in faculty mailboxes located in school and program offices. This is, however, not recommended given that such mailboxes are often in locked offices. Asking staff members to collect assignments and place them in faculty mailboxes are unreasonable burdens on them and at best an option only during normal business hours.

CTL Staff

Dr. Paul F. Diehl, Director

Dr. Karen Huxtable, Associate Director

Beverly Reed, Administrative Assistant II

Teaching Leaders

Dr. Sabrina Starnaman A&H

Dr. Kristin Drogos ATEC

Dr. Shayla Holub BBS

Dr. Paul Battaglio EPPS

Dr. Randy Lehmann ECS

Dr. Rebekah Nix IS

Dr. McClain Watson JSOM

Dr. John Sibert NSM

The University of Texas at Dallas

Center for Teaching and Learning
800 W. Campbell Road, Richardson, Texas 75080-3021
CTL@utdallas.edu; 972-883-2247