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Poster Madness

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Understanding the “Global” in the Global Citizens Project

Sara Dykins Callahan, Instructor

“Now, what exactly is a global citizen?” I asked, my tone shaded with just a bit of skepticism.

Karla Davis-Salazar looked around the room and was met with the expectant faces of beleaguered members of the Undergraduate Council. Davis-Salazar was presenting a draft of the Global Citizen’s Project initiative, one of the many drafts that would be presented to the UGC over the coming months.

When Davis-Salazar explained that, for the purposes of this initiative, global citizenship means attention to cultural diversity with a commitment to promoting social justice and sustainability, my skepticism dissipated, and I knew I wanted to be a part of this program. Through the GCP, students are not only encouraged to develop awareness and appreciation for a wide range of cultural norms, practices, and products, but are also compelled to acknowledge responsibility for their actions and to exercise their agency.

“I’m in!” I declared when, at a later meeting, Davis-Salazar announced the formation of the first GCP Course Redesign Cohorts. “How do I apply?”

After my application to convert my course, Introduction to Food Studies, was approved in September 2015, I began meeting with my GCP cohort and the GCP Learning and Development Facilitators, Sommer Mitchell and Kara Fulton, in an effort to “globalize” our courses and receive certification. In this essay, I would like to share what I found most useful about this process, starting with the collaborative examination of this currently sexy term, “global,” followed by a brief discussion of two techniques I found particularly useful in redesigning my course.

While I was excited about the premise of the GCP and its commitment to active (if not activist) principles, I was skeptical as to its actualization. Particularly questionable is the focus on what, to me, seemed a nebulous and rather empty term: global. Our first cohort meeting addressed exactly this concern. After leading us through a conversation about our colloquial and professional understandings of the term “global,” Mitchell and Fulton offered a

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Teaching Outside the Classroom

C. David Frankel, Instructor & Assistant Director

Last Fall (on October 12th, to be exact), the School of Theatre and Dance’s production of Rhinoceros closed. I served as the director of the production which means, among other things, I collaborated with a team of faculty and student designers, student stage managers and crew, and student actors all working to create a theatrical world that would hold an audience’s interest.

In the theatre, the director often provides the central vision of what that theatrical world should be, then, as much as possible, allows the other theatre artists to use their knowledge and skills to transform that vision into costumes, sets, lights, sound, and actions. In directing a college production, though, I’m always functioning as a teacher – not just a theatre artist.

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clear, relevant definition of global as it is applicable to the GCP. Global refers to the interconnectedness of systems (social, cultural, economic, political, natural, etc.) across the world. Global learning, which is one of the primary goals for students participating in the GCP, requires students engage with and critically analyze these global systems and their impacts on the sustainability of the natural world, as well as human life. Broad? Yes, purposefully so. One of the goals of the GCP is to foster connections across departments and colleges through the curriculum of GCP courses. My humanities-based Food Studies course will be meaningfully and explicitly connected to GCP certified courses in departments like Anthropology and Sociology, as well as STEM programs, by way of the three GCP Global Competencies (global awareness, responsibility, and participation).

All certified courses, no matter the discipline, must choose to focus on at least two of six GCP Course Objectives. Because my course is offered at the 3000-level and is an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of food systems, I chose to focus on Self-Awareness and Practice. While the course already addressed, implicitly, the attendant learning outcomes of these two GCP Objectives, I found the workshop’s focus on backward design invaluable in helping me to more directly identify where and how course materials, activities, and assessments supported student achievement of these outcomes. With the assistance of my peers, I was also able to identify and address gaps in the curriculum. I found a couple of the techniques offered by Mitchell and Fulton particularly useful in this process: distributed practice and building problem-based assignments.

To achieve GCP certification, courses must not only focus on global subject matter, they must also structurally manifest the GCP definition of global. Topics, even if sufficiently diverse and internationally focused, cannot be addressed in isolation. GCP courses must focus on articulating the interconnectedness of these topics. In a similar vein, materials must not be offered or skills taught in isolation. A GCP course must provide students the opportunity to revisit materials and practice skills throughout the semester. Using strategies of distributed practice increases the likelihood that students will retain information over time and master skills; it also facilitates connections between topics and ideas throughout the semester. With this in mind, I revisited my course calendar and considered the location and contents of all activities and assessments. This conscious, deliberate rethinking of my teaching strategy resulted in a revised calendar that focused less on “getting it all in” and more on making sure students have the time and opportunity to think about connections between materials, share their ideas, and practice skills.

In addition to demonstrating distributed practice, GCP courses must feature a problem-based assignment that directly engages the Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes. I already had an assignment I favored; one I had been using for years. The trick was reimagining it as the designated GCP problem-based assignment. First, I had to carefully consider my selected Course Objectives (Self-Awareness and Practice) and the attendant Learning Outcomes (also referred to as behavioral indicators): students will be able to

1) define personal values and beliefs by identifying some of the ethical and practical implications of contemporary processes of food production for individuals and societies (Self-Awareness); and
2) evaluate the impact of individual choices on local and global communities through the creation of projects that identify relevant issues and propose solutions to those issues through a relevant medium (Practice).

The key components were already present in the assignment, but I had to rearticulate the goals and parameters within a problem-solution model. The workshop proved extremely helpful as I brainstormed this repositioning. Now, the assignment clearly defines a problem for my students to tackle: How can beloved cultural rituals that reify problematic food practices be reimagined in ways that are more ethical and sustainable while retaining the cultural importance of the ritual? Whereas the assignment initially asked students to research and perform a personally relevant food ritual (including preparing a meal), it now requires that they also think critically about the implications of that ritual for all subjects involved. It asks them to think about and posit options that could be more sustainable and ethical; to acknowledge their responsibility to act. In the terms of the GCP, the assignment now asks students to demonstrate their global citizenship.

As I worked to “globalize” my Intro to Food Studies course, I was appreciative of the support and camaraderie of my GCP Course Redesign Cohort. The professional assistance I received along with the opportunity to work with peers who shared similar pedagogical interests and commitments were invaluable. And, importantly, I walked away with an improved course design that honors my original intentions and commitments while expanding the opportunities my students will have to understand and act upon their worlds.

Dr. Sara Dykins Callahan is a Senior Instructor in Humanities & Cultural Studies and director of the undergraduate Food Studies certificate. Her research and teaching focus on the intersections of performance studies, food studies, and place studies.
Of course, it goes without saying (I suppose) that I’m helping students learn their craft. Working on a theatre production is, essentially, a prime example of inquiry-based learning. If you’re an actor, you have to figure out who your character is, what he or she wants, what stands in the way of getting it, and so on. Of course, you have to do research—what kind of job does this character have? What did that entail in the time and place of the play? Some of these questions may have factual answers, many do not, in which case actors must draw inferences from the text and from their own experience—and part of my job is to guide them in developing answers to these questions.

The teaching that occurs in rehearsal and production, however, goes beyond the development of character. Rather, it is precisely the development of character—the character of the actor. Working on theatre production, much like playing on an athletic team, promotes a sense of discipline, of collaboration. Students learn (hopefully) that the production is not about them singularly, but about all of them—and that their teammates (the other actors and members of the production team—yes, we call it that) cannot do their jobs well unless everyone else is doing their own.

As they work in rehearsal and then in performance, they learn that the first answer is not necessarily the only answer—and rarely the best. They come to learn that one of the real challenges in theatre is doing it again, for the first time. That is, there’s a difference between remembering what you did the night before and trying to do it again, and being present in the moment as it happens tonight and responding as if you hadn’t rehearsed it and didn’t know what was going to happen. That requires, to a certain degree, a kind of leap of faith, a belief that the other actors will catch you, just as a trapeze artist believes that those outstretched hands will take hold and bring the jumper safely home.

Yes, when we mount a production, we want it to be an artistic success, we want to hear the applause of an appreciative audience—but most of all we (and I believe I speak for all my theatre faculty colleagues) want to know that the students have grown, as developing artists, but more importantly, as developing people. And we believe that theatre, both in the traditional classroom and, especially, in our laboratory—the theatre itself—promotes the kind of self-discovery and self-knowledge without which all the skills and knowledge acquired from the University remain a kind of empty shell. It’s not the only way to fill that shell, but it’s one I believe works extraordinarily well, and I’m happy when I think back on the process of Rhinoceros, and consider the changes the students have wrought on themselves by applying themselves to the task at hand—making good theatre. It’s a lesson worth re-learning every time I direct.

C. David Frankel teaches and serves as Assistant Director of Theatre in the USF School of Theatre and Dance. He is also the Artistic Director of The Tampa Repertory Theatre.

“Working on a theatre production is, essentially, a prime example of inquiry-based learning”
The use of classroom response systems—clickers—is becoming more common each year at USF. When instructors first begin to use them they are typically used for classroom management purposes such as taking or encouraging attendance, checking whether students have done homework, or for getting straightforward information about what students know about the topic. Clickers can also be used to help students develop conceptual understanding of the subject matter. However, to do so requires special skills, which my co-researchers and I call clicker technologies—the ability to use the hardware and software, develop and write high level questions, facilitate serious discussions, and fit it all into the existing curriculum of the course (see Figure 1). (Feldman & Capobianco, 2008)

Much of the discussion that I’ve heard at USF about clickers has focused on issues of hardware and software, the first of the clicker technologies. In the classes that I’ve observed I’ve seen terrific examples of how clicker questions can help move along a lecture and engender student participation within the context of the course curriculum. My purpose here is to present a model of using clickers—Technology Enhanced Formative Assessment (TEFA) that can help students to develop conceptual understanding by focusing on the other two technologies—writing high level questions and facilitating serious discussions, even in the lecture hall. TEFA is based on four principles that are derived from cognitive studies of learning. They are:

1. The use question-driven instruction to motivate and focus student learning;
2. The engagement of students in dialogical discourse to develop their understanding and disciplinary fluency;
3. The use of formative assessment to inform and adjust teaching and learning;
4. The development of students’ metacognitive skills through meta-level communication about learning.

A full explication of these principles is beyond the scope of this brief article. For more information you can read Ian Beatty and William Gerace’ article about TEFA (2009). The fourth principle, however, is worth spending some time on here. Metacognition is often defined as “thinking about thinking.” More specifically, to engage in metacognition is to pay attention to your thinking and learning, and who you are as a thinker and learner. Because metacognition does not necessarily come about naturally, most people need to learn metacognitive skills. In general this means teaching students that they can improve or change their ability to learn, teaching them strategies for planning and goal-setting, and providing opportunities to practice self-monitoring of their learning. TEFA stresses that not only is it important for instructors to teach metacognition, they should engage in talk with their students about metacognition. Good clicker questions and the use of the question cycle described below provide opportunities to both teach metacognitive skills and to engage students in conversations about metacognition within the context of the subject matter.

TEFA is operationalized through the question cycle (see Figure 2). The question cycle has seven steps:

1. Pose clicker question without introduction.

![Table 1: A two-question sequence that relate to the concept of refraction. (Source: clickercentral.net)](http://clickercentral.net)
2. Students discuss in small groups.
3. Students enter response to question.
4. Display the histogram.
5. Class-wide discussion of question without saying which answers are best.
6. Follow-up for closure with general observations, a brief mini-lecture, or a related clicker question.
7. Repeat 3-4 times in an hour class.

In some ways the most important aspects of the question cycle are that the instructor does not identify the correct answer, and typically the clicker questions do not stand on their own—they are always connected to one or more other clicker questions that build upon the students’ ideas that are elicited in the earlier questions.

The description above of the use of the questions 1 and 2 exhibit all four principles of TEFA. The questions are about a common phenomenon that the students can picture in their heads, which can both motivate them and focus their attention on their metacognition. However, the latter comes about through the instructor’s follow-up questions that facilitate the ensuing discussion. The instructor gains formative information about the students’ understanding of the refraction by seeing their results in the histogram, and by listening to what they say in the discussion. Based on that information, the instructor can modify the mini-lecture, present a similar phenomenon that challenges the students’ conceptions, and/or pose additional clicker questions.

In order to make all of the above happen, instructors need to be comfortable with clicker hardware and software, be able to write higher-level questions or have a source of them, have the skills to facilitate open-ended discussions in large as well as small classes, and to fit them into the course with the result that students gain conceptual understanding of the material and become more aware of the ways in which they think about and learn the content. While there is much on the Internet to help accomplish all of this, learning to do TEFA may be best accomplished by working with other faculty in groups like the Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) sponsored by ATLE.

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Allan Feldman is Professor of Science Education in the College of Education. His research areas include teacher learning and action research. Most recently he has been studying the ways in which people learn to do research.
With many conferences now having poster opportunities and competitions for undergraduates and/or graduates, students need to learn some basic skills to create a quality poster. The purpose of this article is to equip you with tips for helping a student create a quality poster.

I am not a professional poster designer; I am a faculty member in the School of Geosciences and have been working with undergraduate and graduate students for years as they disseminate their research via posters (and papers) at conferences. I also served as Chair of the Education Committee of the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers. In this role, I created a poster evaluation rubric with a team and initiated the Undergraduate Poster competition at their annual meeting. I also have presented about poster design at several active learning swap shops. At the Association of American Geographers annual meeting, I was invited to serve on a panel focusing on posters.

First, it is necessary for students to understand that a poster is a visual communication tool and there is no magic formula for success. Rather, there are several methods to make the process easier. Ask the students what are some of the advantages and disadvantages of displaying a poster at a conference. Generally, the poster is thought to be less intimidating compared to presenting a paper; the session is more informal, and allows more time for discussion and interaction, and opportunities to network. Very importantly, in effect, you can view the poster in “play”, “fast forward” and “rewind” modes, taking it at your own pace. This is not possible with a paper presentation where if you miss what was said for a second, you can’t easily go back and get the information. However, the downside of a poster presentation is that the room can be noisy and cramped, the session can be a little repetitive and tiring, and a poster can take up a great deal of time in preparation ahead of the conference.

Reinforce that it is expected now that the poster is software generated (e.g. through Power Point, Illustrator or Page Maker), rather than a cut and paste paper on a board. Students should consider how to get the poster to the conference; a mail tube will protect it. However, some conferences now have the option to pay a fee and have your poster available to you upon arrival. This may actually be more convenient and cost beneficial, especially if an airline charges you for your poster tube as extra luggage. Remind the students that if they bring a poster tube, to put a label on it with their name and number, since the poster tube is an easy thing to forget in the overhead luggage area of a plane.

It is important to remind the student that a poster is not a manuscript, so the Keep It Simple Student (KISS) principle should be applied, as it must be as concise as possible. The student will want to convey the big picture and not the details. Graphics, not text, should dominate a poster. It is appealing to the viewer to have some white space between sections. Have the student think about the flow of the poster - ask the students should the poster flow like figure A or figure B?

![Figure A](image1)

![Figure B](image2)

A is preferable. In figure B, you are walking from left to right back and then to left to right again, which will be particularly awkward for other people viewing the poster.

The content of the poster is of utmost importance. The title, typically along the top, should be eye catching (never more than 2 lines long) and should be in at least a 72-point font. Authors and affiliations should be in a smaller font below the title. It is really important in the introduction to hook the audience and pique their interest. The methodology should be fairly brief. I remind my students that the results section is typically the largest where they should illustrate what they found with graphs and tables. Just like a paper, I remind students that the conclusions should summarize the major findings, highlight their significance, and provide the implications of their research. An acknowledgements section should be included to thank people providing advice on the...
Teaching to Inspire Creativity
Sara Friedman, Learning and Development Facilitator, Adjunct Instructor

We are always looking for better ways to deliver effective learning experiences and coax great work out of our students. One common approach that is employed by instructors in many assignments and activities is asking that students get creative. Student creativity is solicited through a number of means; writing, presentations, and art projects, among others. Asking students to think creatively speaks to their ability to produce original content and to “think outside of the box.” Student work that exhibits an element of creativity is often encouraged, and subsequently rewarded, in the grading process. Beyond college, students will benefit from having the skills to think creatively, traits that many employers look for in job candidates. However, the question should be asked: what, exactly, does creativity mean to you, as an instructor? It’s fairly subjective—the direction to “be creative” can be interpreted differently by each individual. Additionally, the medium through which the student is being assessed will also have an impact on the manner of the creativity.

Despite its subjective nature, the merits of infusing creative practices into the classroom provide enough justification for their use. Creative assignments can give students an outlet for their ideas, as well as help them to view concepts and solve problems from different perspectives. Within the realm of the college classroom, creativity is not limited only to students. Employing inventive teaching methods into one’s lesson planning or course design is a form of modeling—getting creative with your teaching will show your students that you value creativity. So what does creativity mean? It means inspiring students, whatever form that may take. It means conveying a sense of passion and enthusiasm for a subject. It means encouraging student curiosity and inquisitiveness. It means drawing ideas from a variety of sources or disciplines and experimenting with and tweaking strategies. Ultimately, it means turning the course experience into one that focuses on students’ active learning.

More specifically, though, creativity in teaching and practice can take on a variety of forms. A hallmark of being creative is originality, so the exact way in which an instructor will approach adding creativity into their repertoire will vary based on teaching style, discipline, and desired learning outcomes. However, that’s not to say that one needs to start from scratch. Many people feel that they are “just not very creative” (a sentiment that’s also shared by a number of students). Like any other skill, though, creativity can be developed and cultivated. An instructor can begin this process by adopting an existing idea and adding their own distinct touch.

During the Fall 2014 semester, an ATLE Faculty Learning Community (FLC) focusing on Creativity in the Classroom met to share creative teaching practices and ways in which those practices can be applied across disciplines. The ideas and activities that were discussed ranged from having students share in a group discussion personal experiences that were connected to topics being covered in an anthropology course, to the use of clickers coupled with case studies, making a typically passive activity interactive, in a large biology lecture. The cross-disciplinary make-up of the members of the FLC allowed them to identify ways in which an instructor can successfully adapt an idea gained from various sources: a colleague, a website, a conference, or any other outlet. The main points that the members identified include:

- Attempt to identify the important elements of the idea that make it work (i.e., structure, timing, medium).
- Look for any related themes or principles that can be easily transferred from one discipline to another. For instance, the chronological aspect of constructing a timeline. One course might use a timeline to outline the history of a field, another to show the progress of an important singular event.
- Don’t be afraid to pull together seemingly disparate parts of activities to create something new and better suited to your course.
- Test it out—let students know that you will be trying something new, and ask for their feedback.

Creative ideas can be simple in nature, like a short in-class synthesizing activity to re-engage students during a lecture, or they can be more ambitious, such as a semester-long group assignment involving students partnering with community organizations to develop a project. A creative mindset can be applied generally, providing support for an instructor’s overall philosophy of teaching and their style, and it can be applied more precisely, to a specific lesson plan, strategy, lecture, or activity. The key is to experiment; look for or brainstorm ideas that you feel will be fun or new or different to try in your course. If it’s not exciting to the instructor, it will likely fall flat with students, as well. Teaching with creativity (and, in turn, requesting creativity from students) challenges students to make the time and effort that they invest into your course meaningful and memorable.

Sara Friedman is a Learning and Development Facilitator in the Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ATLE) and an Adjunct Instructor for the Academic Foundations course.
Incorporating Social Media in Teaching and Learning
Deoksoon Kim, Associate Professor

New social media technologies provide powerful tools for university teachers. Our students are often referred to as “digital natives,” and they are comfortable with, interested in, and motivated to use new technologies in their learning. We can take advantage of this to enrich our teaching, incorporating social media technologies both as a means to engage our students and as a new set of channels for helping them learn content.

I use the term “social media” for tools that facilitate social interaction through the Internet. I have used various social media tools in my teaching, including Podcasting, Blogging, Second Life, Wikis, and Facebook. I have also done research on how these tools have worked for my students. In this essay I briefly describe five ways in which I have incorporated various social media into my courses.

Incorporating Podcasting and Blogging with Preservice Teachers
A podcast is an audio or video presentation available for download over the Internet to be played through a computer or a handheld device. Blogging involves the posting of opinions or presentations on a website for others to read or view. I want my preservice teachers to practice using podcasts and blogs, both so that they can use these tools in their own teaching and so that we can use them to help learn content in my course. I make these tools the primary medium for assignments, so that they must learn these tools. I assign an “English language learner case study” in which students must accomplish several tasks: I ask them to gather data on an English Language Learner in a local school; analyze the data and develop an empirically-supported account of the learner’s language development; create a podcast to share some audio samples and results from their case study, both for me and their classmates; post their case study to a class blog; and use the blog to post reflections on others’ case studies (Fisher & Kim, 2014; Kim, 2011; Kim & Jang, 2014). The social media components of this assignment expand students’ understandings of English language learners and their literacy development, both by requiring the synthesis of data and the development of an argument and by involving them in dialogue with colleagues about a range of case studies.

Using Second Life with Preservice Teachers
Students learning to teach second language learners must do a practicum with actual learners, in order to develop their skills. In some cases, however, we cannot find an accessible language learner with the appropriate background and context. This is a more serious problem for students at universities in less diverse settings. I have solved this problem by using Second Life, an Internet-based multiuser virtual environment that includes speakers and learners of diverse languages from all over the world. In one study we enlisted a language learner to enter the Second Life virtual world and interact with our preservice teachers, as a way of providing a virtual practicum in a case where no actual practicum would be feasible (Kim & Blankenship, 2013).

Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language Using Facebook
A collaborator and I used Facebook to teach Chinese as a foreign language to American university students (Wang & Kim, 2014). We asked them to talk with each other about course assignments through Facebook posts in Chinese, which provided them practice in reading and writing the foreign language. Because of their familiarity with the social media, students quickly expanded their Chinese posts to include personal reflections and experiences from daily life, in a way that both involved them more deeply in class and provided naturalistic practice reading and writing in the foreign language. Incorporating authentic tasks in Facebook provided authentic opportunities for language practice and facilitated situated language learning.

Teaching Spanish Using Second Life
Second Life offers an authentic, interactive context for language learners to practice target languages. Instead of having to travel to a Spanish-speaking country, my collaborators and I helped university students of Spanish find productive Spanish-language spaces in Second Life. Students were able to practice speaking and listening, reading and writing in Spanish with native speakers, and they learned about various Spanish cultures as well. We also created a Spanish language learning classroom in Second Life, where we gathered as a class to do class work. By using an engaging social media platform for practicing a foreign language, we were able to motivate students and make them more comfortable and confident in using another language without any extra expense (Kim, Vorobel, & King, 2013).

English as Second Language Collaborative Writing Using Wikis
Wikis, a popular communication and collaboration tool, can facilitate language learning and is often used in college classrooms. To encourage collaborative learning in writing tasks in an ESL writing course, a collaborator and I examined the dynamics of peer interaction across tasks during wiki-based collaborative writing tasks that used a Wikispaces site. Language learners engaged in dynamic interactions and networked writing activities. Using wikis in this course facilitated productive scaffolding in dynamic

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research and funding sources (adding the funding agency’s logo and the university logo either side of your title is also a good idea). A reference section should be kept short (limited to 5-7 max). Finally the student should review to check for mistakes before showing the faculty mentor, in particular spelling mistakes (Yes, I did do that on purpose!). Finally, a nice touch at the conference is to put up a folder next to the poster, with handouts inside and a copy of the poster, with a “please take one” sign on the outside of the folder. The handout could include your contact information or business card, a miniature copy of your poster, detailed methodology, an annotated reference list, and relevant websites (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Poster Display. Note to the left is a folder with a copy of the poster on it with additional handouts inside. Also shown are flyers which advertise our graduate program.

There are numerous other tips you can share such as considering those who are color-blind, text font and size, presenting your poster, and what to wear and what not to wear. I have provided some resources below which will help address some of these issues. Some of these resources offer templates which help students get started as well as highlight good and bad examples of posters. I provide students the tips to a successful poster, then I have them critique some different posters (good and bad) before they begin their own. The Office of Undergraduate Research has further resources and provides presentations on this topic.

Resources:
• Templates: http://bit.ly/26dC4LL
• Examples: http://bit.ly/1rgmqiS
• Do’s and Don’ts: http://bit.ly/1VC1LLe

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Johnny El-Rady (Department of Cell Biology, Microbiology and Molecular Biology, USF) who kindly shared his resources with me shortly after my arrival to USF in 2005.

Jennifer Collins is an Associate Professor of Geography. Her research focuses on weather and climate.

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But given the promise of the tools, I would encourage colleagues to consider how social media might enrich their teaching.

Note: The papers cited can be found at http://bit.ly/1Sv0WoI

Dr. Deoksoon Kim is an Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning. She has published 28 peer-reviewed articles and chapters. She is co-editor of the forthcoming volume Discourse and Education, to be published by Springer (in press). She also received the Florida TESOL Outstanding Educator Award (2012) and the USF Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award (2008).
Enhancing Teaching Through Small Group Instructional Feedback (SGIF)

Emad Mansour, Learning and Development Facilitator

At the end of each semester, all students receive electronic course evaluation forms. This evaluation form is designed to provide instructors and administration with information on course/instructor effectiveness. The collected data are used by the administration to demonstrate the effectiveness of their educational institution in regard to teaching and learning. However, because the students currently enrolled in the course aren’t directly benefiting from these summative evaluations, they don’t often see value in submitting those forms, which may result in a low response rate.

Providing students with the opportunity to express their needs and concerns after a few weeks of instruction, while the course is still in progress, can have a great impact on both the teaching and learning experience for those students during that semester. Students’ perceptions can be channeled into opportunities for instructional improvement. The instructor may make any changes needed to improve the quality of his/her teaching and subsequently students’ learning. Collected feedback will also help the instructors improve their teaching in future iterations of the course.

Instructors can collect this feedback by themselves around the mid-point of the semester; typically between the fourth and the seventh week of the course. Instructors can build an anonymous survey in Canvas or use the Qualtrics survey tool (which is available for faculty at USF). Instructors may also request for a consultant from The Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ATLE) to come to their classes and conduct a small group instructional feedback (SGIF) session, which we recommend.

In the case of SGIF, the consultant arrives 25-30 minutes before the end of class time. The instructor introduces the consultant to the students and then leaves the room. The consultant reviews the SGIF process with the students and explains that this is a voluntary process and that he/she has come upon the instructor’s request to collect students’ feedback in order to enhance teaching and learning in this class.

The consultant divides the class into small groups of 3-4 students for small classes; 6-8 students for large classes, and hands each group a sheet of paper with the following three questions:

1. What is going well in this class so far? Or, what do you like about your instructor’s teaching? (This item reveals what the teacher should keep doing.)

2. What aspects of your teacher’s teaching or the course need improvement? (This item lets the teacher know what he or she might change or start doing.)

3. What other comments do you have? (This item relates to aspects of the course not covered by the two previous questions such as the quality of the learning environment.)

Students work in groups for 6-8 minutes to discuss and write answers for all three questions on that sheet. Each group assigns a scribe and a spokesperson to present their responses. The consultant listens to each group and facilitates a discussion for one question at a time with the whole class, without making any evaluative remarks on the students’ comments. If there is a disagreement among students on one issue, the consultant can dig deeper and try to reach a consensus that he/she can present clearly to the instructor. This is a major advantage of SGIF vs an electronic anonymous survey. The consultant takes notes as needed, or asks one student to serve as scribe for this discussion by taking notes for the remainder of the course period. In the end, the consultant collects the sheets from all groups, thanks them and dismisses the class. Collected feedback is put in a written report and privately shared with the instructor in a one-on-one meeting.

It is important that the instructor goes back to class after that meeting and explains to the students any changes he/she can make, as well as other changes that cannot be made, along with the reason(s) why. Things that instructor maybe able to change are usually related to homework assignments, testing, availability, due dates or canvas related issues. However, if students request, for example, changing the grading policy or posting the PowerPoint presentations on Canvas before class, the instructor may decide not to do so and will explain to students the reasoning behind this choice.

By all means, the changes the instructor makes in the remaining weeks of the semester in response to students’ comments or advice are valued by students. Students genuinely appreciate having a voice in shaping the instruction in their class and that their teacher cares about improving the quality of his/her teaching and their learning. This appreciation can often result in an improved end-of-semester evaluation.

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ATLE Events Update: 2016 Celebration of Teaching & STS-03

July Teaching Symposium
The third annual Summer Teaching Symposium (STS-03) took place from May 11–12, 2016. This year’s theme was “Flip It!”—faculty explored the “flipped classroom” technique of moving content delivery to online only, and doing more activities in seat time. Topics discussed included everything from technical options and tweaks to best practices for using the newly free class time. Around 120 faculty were in attendance.

Celebration of Teaching
On March 8th, 2016, faculty from all around the USF campus came out to the first annual Celebration of Teaching, held in the Marshall Student Center Ballroom, to connect with colleagues from different disciplines and gather effective teaching ideas.

The Celebration of Teaching was a one-day event that aimed to recognize and share the great teaching strategies, techniques, and practices in use at USF. The event consisted of a faculty poster session and a resource fair featuring various university offices. Each poster showcased one innovative teaching strategy, technique, pedagogy, or even trick used by the presenting faculty member (see example).

The poster session was followed by a discussion panel featuring three of the winners of the 2015 Provost’s Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award: Kyna Betancourt, Steven Surrency, and Milton Wendland. The event also included an introduction from Provost Ralph Wilcox, a catered lunch, and a number of giveaways. ATLE intends to host the event again next Spring, and we hope to see you there! For more information about this year’s Celebration of Teaching, including photos and a full list of all presenters and their posters, visit http://www.usf.edu/atle/events/celebration-of-teaching.aspx

The two-day event consisted of plenary meetings, breakout sessions, and small cohort group meetings at the beginning and end of each day. During the final cohort meeting on the second day, the participants put together group presentations summarizing what they had gained from the past two days and their resulting action plan. For more information about STS-03 and to see a preview for next year’s event, visit http://www.usf.edu/atle/events/summer-institute.aspx
Submissions

Faculty Voices is a scholarly publication that is written by and for faculty at the University of South Florida (USF). It is published by USF’s Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ATLE). Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university’s community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty, whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This publication represents an opportunity for faculty to reach their peers throughout the growing USF community. Faculty Voices invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at atle.usf.edu. Please send your submissions to atle@usf.edu.

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