

PAES Instructional Enhancement Initiative

College of Education, The Ohio State University

Coming up in Autumn, 2005...

Keep your copy of the "Making Time" book—we will make use of it to have some great workshops and discussions on faculty worklife and its effects on teaching.

Faculty who employ one of the tips in the book will be encouraged to share their results this autumn.

So, have a wonderful, relaxing, summer, and come back rested and ready for some great PAES Instructional Enhancement Discussions this autumn!

Congratulations to the SFHP GTA Program!!

This program is the recipient of the first-ever University Departmental Award for Exemplary Graduate Teaching Associate Programs!

The committee commended PAES for a "Collaborative effort in creating a culture that values teaching and learning"

Congratulations to the SFHP GTA program and to Jackie Goodway & Chuck Shiebler for their leadership!

Spring "Eggheads" Discussion: Making Time, Making Change!

On Monday, June 6, 20 PAES faculty met with two representatives of the OSU Office of Human Resources (Shari Mickey-Boggs, Director of Worklife, and Nancy Messerly, OHRD Consultant) and Dr. Kathryn Plank from FTAD to discuss ways to improve balance in faculty life.

The topic, "Quality of Life and the Commitment to Teaching: Making Time, Making Change" drew quite a bit of interest and discussion from PAES faculty

participants. Director Donna Pastore came to offer her support to faculty and to encourage the generation of some practical solutions.

Faculty in attendance were asked to respond to a set of questions (included in this newsletter, below so everyone can take time to reflect on them) - and to think about ways in which PAES and the PAES Instructional Enhancement Initiative can help.

Each of the two tables were clearly engaged in lively discussion—as evidenced by the fact that everyone was still busy talking at 1pm, and a group of about 6 faculty stayed for about 30 minutes after the workshop to continue the discussion! Some notes from the discussions will be forthcoming, and the topic of balance, and its effects on teaching, will continue into the autumn quarter.

Thanks to all who attended!

Questions from the Spring Discussion:

1. What is it that keeps you overloaded and overwhelmed?
2. What is it that keeps you feeling overloaded and overwhelmed?
3. What is it about these components of your job that contribute to these feelings?
4. How does this affect your teaching? Your overall life as a faculty member?
5. What part of them are within your control?
6. What part of them could you give up or change?
7. What part are you willing to give up or change?
8. What barriers are there to giving these up?
 - a. Are they internal or external?
 - b. Are they actual barriers? Or assumptions?
9. How can PAES and the PAES Instructional Enhancement Initiative realistically and positively work to change the climate?

Book on "Avoiding Overload" Distributed to PAES Faculty, Staff, & GTAs

The PAES Instructional Enhancement Initiative has purchased a copy of *Making Time, Making Change: Avoiding Overload in College Teaching*, for each PAES faculty member, as well as copies to share with staff and GTAs. These books will be distributed before the end of spring quarter. We hope you will take time during the summer to look over this short book that is filled with dozens of quick "time savers" and "change ideas." Maybe you will even decide to employ one of the strategies it offers and to share your results with faculty during autumn quarter.

From the book cover:

"Lack of time may be the single most commonly experienced problem among American faculty. It is fair to say that the overwhelming majority of faculty...feel overloaded in their teaching lives; they perceive that they do not have time to do their basic faculty duties properly; and they believe that overload goes with the job. We complain yet we do not reflect on and evaluate our paradigms for how we use our time. Perhaps a pernicious norm has evolved: anyone not complaining about being overwhelmed is suspect. We act as if we have no choice."

Addressing Academic Freedom & Issues of Diversity in the Classroom

By Wendy Naumann

Assistant Professor of School Psychology &
PAES Diversity Coordinator

Recently I was asked by an instructor to provide feedback on a situation in which a student refused to read an assigned text because of his personal beliefs about the content. The assigned text was one of two required readings needed to complete one of the course assignments, and the two readings were actually opposing views on an issue that was directly related to the purpose of the course. The student refused to read the material because the articles were indirectly addressing issues pertaining to sexual orientation, and therefore, the student refused to complete the assignment. In this situation, the student understood that he would receive a failing grade for the assignment, and he accepted this consequence for his choice to “stand up” for his personal beliefs. However, not all students who may decide to “boycott” certain class content will be as diplomatic in that stance.

In the current political climate, threats to academic freedom have included state legislation in six states including Ohio’s Senate Bill 24. The Academic Bill of Rights legislation being advocated for by David Horowitz and the Students for Academic Freedom is being opposed by the American Association of University Professors, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Center for Campus Free Speech. The basic premise of the Academic Bill of Rights is that given that most faculty are Democrats and given certain positions of the AAUP regarding academic freedom, legislation is needed to ensure “political pluralism and diversity.” The Academic Bill of Rights addresses how faculty would be expected to deal with “controversial” topics and ensure “neutrality” in the classroom. In essence, the handling of “controversial” topics and “neutrality” would no longer be the purview of faculty, but would be decided upon by administrators and legislators.

Threats to academic freedom can ultimately affect discussions related to diversity and the classroom climate for students and teachers who are members of populations typically targeted by diversity initiatives. While a discussion of the legal

and historical context for academic freedom is beyond the scope of this article, faculty need to be proactive when dealing with such issues in the classroom by being well versed in the policies and procedures surrounding academic freedom and other matters related to the rights of faculty. Many web sites can be found on academic freedom, and at OSU academic freedom is monitored by a university-level committee and is addressed in the bylaws.

Bylaws for The Ohio State University (3335-5-01 Academic Freedom and Responsibility) state that the “university endorses full academic freedom as essential to attain the goal of the free search for truth and its free exposition. Academic freedom and academic responsibility are twin guardians of the integrity of institutions of higher learning. This integrity is essential to the preservation of a free society and explains the willingness of society historically to accept the concept of academic freedom and, in addition, to protect it through the institution of academic tenure.”

Within the classroom, teachers at OSU are given the freedom to (1) teach, conduct research, and publish research findings and (2) discuss in classrooms, in their own manner, any material that is relevant to the subject matter as defined in the course syllabus. The bylaws also set forth seven academic responsibilities that are also needed to ensure the “free search for truth.”

President Holbrook indirectly addressed issues related to academic freedom in a speech given shortly after the declaration of war against Iraq where she reminded us of the “special challenges and important responsibilities we have to provide venues for open discussion and dialog about our national situation at the same time we prepare to protect the safety and security of our people and our environment.” As a proactive response to President Holbrook’s comments, the individuals at FTAD created guidelines for classroom discussions related to international tension and domestic protest. These guidelines were adaptations of similar documents created by the University of Michigan’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching and the University of Washington’s Center for Instructional Development & Research

Addressing Academic Freedom & Issues of Diversity in the Classroom

The material provided below is an adaptation of the guidelines created by individuals at FTAD and the modifications were made to apply the guidelines to controversial topics in general and not just those related to war.

If a controversial or emotionally-charged event has recently happened, you may simply want to begin class by saying something yourself and then move on to other topics, or you may choose to have a discussion. At a minimum, you can acknowledge the profound impact that this event may have had on students in the class.

A “controversial” topic may come up unexpectedly in class. You can deal with an unexpected topic by (A) acknowledging the concern of the student who raised the issue and also point out that all those in the room have their own individual responses and concerns, (B) deciding whether you are ready and willing to engage with this topic now. Instructors should not feel compelled to lead a discussion on a topic that would be too difficult for the instructor to facilitate in an unbiased manner or a topic that is not an appropriate use of class time, (C) getting a quick sense from the class if others would like to devote time to sharing views. If you do pursue a discussion, set a time frame and then look to the strategies outlined below for suggestions about format for the discussion, and (D) if a discussion seems inappropriate, or other students resist having a discussion on the spot, pointing out the available forums on campus and encourage students to attend them, stay informed, and share their concerns. Alternatively, you could schedule a discussion for a later class and suggest ways that students could prepare for it.

If you decide to have a discussion regarding a current event or “controversial” topic, think through supportive ways to introduce and close such a discussion. Create a framework for the discussion by beginning with the reasons you are having the discussion, acknowledging that there are widely divergent opinions and feelings about the issue, and asking students to discuss their hopes and fears about having the discussion. By asking students to discuss their confusion and anxiety about the topic, silence on the

part of some students can be avoided and an emotional context that may foster a sense of mutual respect can be created. Additional perspective taking can be enhanced by asking in what ways students are personally affected by the event. The discussion can continue with how these events might affect the student’s future or the country/city/state’s future. Brainstorming possible positive actions individuals can take (e.g., give blood, support students new to campus or far from home) and encouraging students to continue the dialogue and look for ways to take advantage of campus programming on the topic may also provide avenues for students to take action thus reducing a sense of helplessness.

Before beginning a class discussion, the instructor can ask the class to establish ground rules. It is likely students’ opinions will differ strongly, and involving them in establishing these ground rules will make it more likely that their discussions will be civil and productive. Some possible ground rules might include: (a) avoiding blame and speculation, (b) respecting each other’s views and avoid inflammatory language, (c) understanding that it is okay to express anger and frustration within limits. (While it is important for students to express themselves, it is also vital to control the class and maintain an environment that feels safe for all students.), (d) agreeing to discuss this topic in a way that does not shut out any members of the class, and (e) making it okay to share personal stories and feelings. (Be prepared for some students to be emotional, and try to support and comfort them. Be aware of services to which you might refer students whose emotional reactions are beyond your abilities.)

Instructors should allow everyone a chance to talk (when possible), but should not force students to participate. Facilitating a welcoming discussion can be done by using a “round” (give each student a chance to speak in response to a guiding question without interruption or discussion, allowing students to pass if they desire). Following the round, you can open the discussion for general response. You can also divide students into partners or groups, and give students a chance to write down their thoughts before speaking.

To become more involved in the initiative,
contact:

Darcy Haag Granello
356 Arps Hall

Phone: 688-4605
Email: granello.1@osu.edu

PAES TEACHING INITIATIVE WEBSITE:
WWW.COE.OHIO-STATE.EDU/PAES
THEN, LOOK UNDER "INFORMATION FOR FACULTY"

Addressing Academic Freedom & Issues of Diversity in the Classroom

(continued from page 3.)

Being prepared for the fact that, sometimes, groups may get blamed in the media and there may be a backlash against a certain group of people is essential. It is important that students not be doubly hurt -- first by the horrors of a traumatic event that affect us all and second by misguided generalizations. It may also be important for you to make an explicit statement that all students are welcome in your class, and that you expect students to treat one another with respect. Referring back to the university's Academic Plan and Diversity Action Plan may also be helpful when ensuring a climate that is welcome for all.

Finally, specific guidelines for how to address conflict between faculty and students can be found in the university's Handbook on

Teaching. If a student becomes disruptive during a class discussion especially in reaction to a conflict that s/he is having with the instructor, the instructor should gently but firmly state that the matter be discussed outside of the classroom. If the immediate emotional reactions of the student or instructor become too intense, recommending a "cooling off" period can be very helpful. Instructors should take a perspective in order to understand the beliefs and motivation behind the student's behavior and define the reasons for the conflict as clearly as possible by avoiding side issues and engaging in reflective listening. Ultimately, instructors have the right to ask a student to leave the class if the disruption is preventing other students from learning. If the student refuses to leave and continues to disrupt,

the instructor should contact the University Police.

Diversity issues in the classroom are best dealt with through a classroom culture of empathy and investment in the student's development, however, such issues are often emotionally-laden and infused with issues related to power. Instructors need to balance their investment in student needs with their role of authority in the classroom. Instructors do have responsibilities for the student-teacher and student-student relationships, and these responsibilities include the creation of a welcoming learning environment for all.

For more information and resources on this topic, contact the Office of Faculty & TA Development.
