

Murray State Teaching Chronicles

Connecting the Teaching Community at Murray State University

Fall 2005 • Edition 1

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A New Year, a New Teaching Scholar-in-Residence, and a New Publication

by Linda Miller, Director Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology

I'd like to use this space to make a couple of introductions.

The first is to welcome Dr. Ricky Cox, Associate Professor of Chemistry, to the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. Ricky will be with us this year as our 2005-06 Teaching Scholar-in-Residence. He will be carrying on the tradition set by Dr. Joy Navan who served as CTLT's first teaching scholar-in-residence for the academic year 2004-05. Ricky will be meeting regularly with faculty on issues related to teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning. He is also spearheading the Murray State Teaching Chronicles, which is this publication and the focus of the second introduction.

The Murray State teaching community has a committed base of excellent, articulate faculty. Ricky has tapped into this base and over the course of the year will be working with faculty to produce short articles for publication in the Murray State Teaching Chronicles that speak to issues and philosophies related to teaching. While we will print a few copies of the Teaching Chronicles, costs considerations will make this primarily an electronic journal.

We thank Ricky for coordinating this excellent discourse on a topic central to the future of higher education and Murray State University.

You can find the series of Murray State Teaching Chronicles online at <http://racernet.murraystate.edu/mstc/>

Upcoming Event

September 22-23, 2005
8th Annual Teaching and Technology Forum will be held in Performing Arts Hall, Fine Arts Building. For information, see: <http://racernet.murraystate.edu/forum05/>



The Red Ink Corner

by James Ricky Cox, Ph.D. Department of Chemistry, 2005–06 Teaching Scholar-in-Residence at CTLT

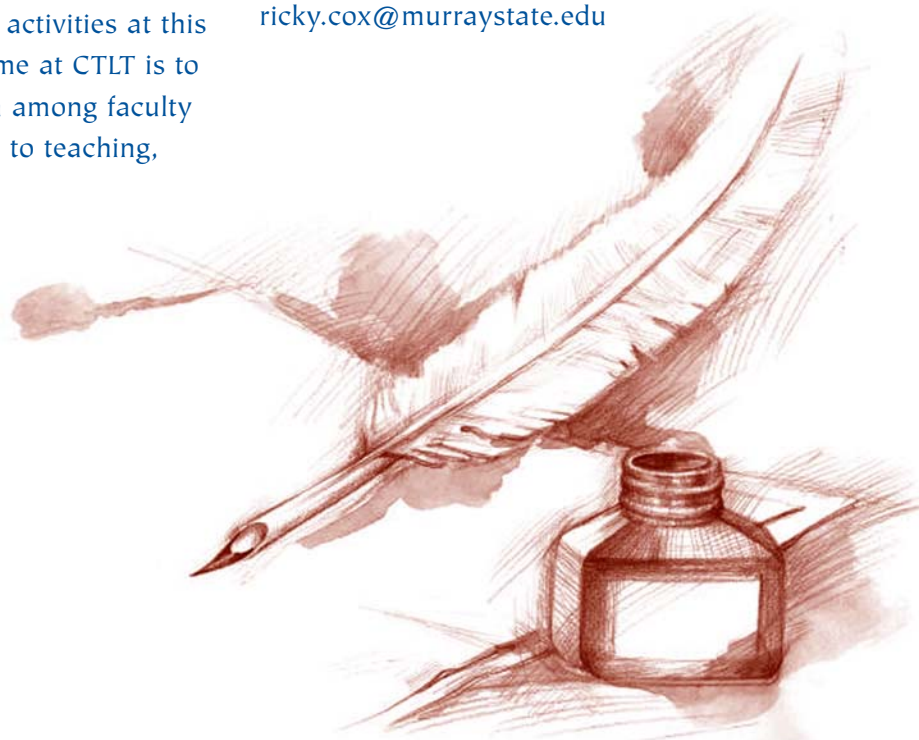
As the current Teaching Scholar-in-Residence at the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT), this is my little corner of the Murray State Teaching Chronicles (MS/TC) to provide opening comments. I am proud to be the first Editor of this new publication brought to you by CTLT that is focused on issues associated with teaching and learning. I want to thank the entire staff of CTLT for their support and especially Beth Call, who created the design and layout of the MS/TC.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles in the first edition of the MS/TC. The faculty members who have contributed articles in this edition were asked to provide their thoughts on teaching with a particular emphasis on teaching excellence, an important term that takes many forms across campus. Indeed, the strategic plan for Murray State places quality teaching and learning as pre-eminent activities at this institution. A major goal during my time at CTLT is to facilitate a campus-wide conversation among faculty and staff concerning all issues related to teaching,

technology and student learning. I want to thank the faculty members who gave me some of their valuable time and for the thought, clarity and passion in which they discuss such an important subject. At a time when many articles and books want to provide step-by-step instructions or roadmaps to improve teaching, it is important to take a step back and think about our roles as teachers and mentors.

I want to invite interested faculty and staff to contact me concerning ideas and articles for future editions of the MS/TC. The entire CTLT staff and I want this publication to be a vehicle for stimulating productive conversations on teaching and learning and to be a showcase for innovative teaching strategies.

J. Ricky Cox
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Gift Exchange

by James Duane Bolin, Ph.D. Department of History

I have been on the receiving end of many gifts in my life. What a gift my family has been to me! What joy they bring to me each day. My home has been a gift that has brought to me a sense of place and a haven of rest. Throughout my life, teachers—my spouse, my son, my daughter, my parents, my brother—have taught me what it means to give and receive love. And it is the idea of gift exchange that has caused me to strive to teach better in my university classroom. After all, my calling as a teacher is a gift in itself.

I think of my own teachers: Mrs. Bradford in a seminary kindergarten, Mrs. Eubanks in first grade, Mr. Harding, a victim of polio who inspired me in the seventh grade to learn History, Hugh Ridenour, who inspired me in high school to teach History, Dr. Taylor and Dr. Wardin and Dr. Chamlee in undergraduate school, all models of caring professionalism, and Dr. Garrett and Dr. Nelli in graduate school who took a special interest in me and saw in me something that I did not see. These teachers showered me with gifts—gifts of learning and inspiration. How I wish I could tell them thank you in a way that would convey to them the depth of my gratitude.

What if I could go back and be a student again, listening to a story on the oval, braided rug of my kindergarten classroom, running down the hill of the playground at Oaklawn Elementary School, walking the halls at Webster County High, soaking in the

lectures in undergraduate school, or talking with my professors in corner offices in graduate school. How much more I could learn! In P. F. Kluge's *Alma Mater*, the author went back to teach at his old school, Kenyon College in Ohio. There he had lunch one day with a new colleague, an English professor, who opened the conversation with the observation that "this is my twenty-second year of teaching *Tintern Abbey*." The English professor bore the repetition by making each reading in each new class fresh, and by looking on teaching as a gift exchange. "I have this romantic idea of teaching as gift exchange," he told Kluge. "What matters is if I

reach a few students at a level that transforms them and gets them to see the world in a different way. Gift exchange. Sure, teaching is method and information, but it's something else, a gift, an enrichment of your life, a transformation that you spend the rest of your life discovering."

- This was adapted from a WKMS Commentary by Dr. Bolin.
- Duane Bolin is a Professor in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. He received his Ph.D. in 1988 from the University of Kentucky and has been at Murray State University for 10 years.

"These teachers showered me with gifts—gifts of learning and inspiration. How I wish I could tell them thank you in a way that would convey to them the depth of my gratitude."



Teaching Excellence: Sharing Part of Yourself

by Maeve McCarthy, Ph.D. Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Writing an article about “teaching excellence” is a daunting task. I don’t think of myself as an excellent teacher, merely someone who strives to be. Like most academics, I have little formal training in education. My discipline is applied mathematics—one where communication with other fields is essential to the success of interdisciplinary projects. My interest in good teaching stems from this emphasis on communication. Explaining mathematics effectively to people with varying (and perhaps limited) mathematical backgrounds is what I try to do every day—through my teaching and through my research.

When I began teaching, my advisor told me that to teach well you need to share some of yourself with your students. At the time, I saw this as an invasion of privacy. I didn’t want to share my personal life with my students. With experience, I have begun to look at his philosophy somewhat differently. It’s more about sharing your personality than the details of your life. My most successful teaching is when I share a part of who I am – when I am uninhibited about my enthusiasm for my discipline, when the examples I use in class reflect my current research interests, when I am excited about my job. I believe that sharing part of yourself is one of the keys to teaching excellence.

If sharing part of who we are is part of teaching excellence, then it’s important to realize that as we

change with time what we share must also change. Over the last few years, I have become what can only be described as a “gadget girl”. My interest in technology has transcended all parts of my life. Last fall, I brought that part of myself into my classes. I began teaching with a Tablet PC. I’d like to think that my excitement was infectious and created a more positive learning environment for my students.

An interesting side-effect of sharing this part of my current self with my students was that it allowed me to connect with a part of my old self. As a student I rarely took notes. When I did, I learned very little during class. There were a few excellent note takers in my classes and I took advantage of their generosity

by copying their notes. I learned differently than many of my fellow students. I know from personal experience that for some students taking notes during class can be an impediment to learning. Using the Tablet PC in class allowed me to archive a set of notes created during class and to make them available on Blackboard. I shared my personal experience with my students – letting them know that I put a higher a priority on their learning than their note-taking. I was astounded by the number of

my students who stopped taking notes during class and printed the notes that I had created instead. There was a significant increase in the number of questions that my students asked during class. All of

“My most successful teaching is when I share a part of who I am—when I am uninhibited about my enthusiasm for my discipline, when the examples I use in class reflect my current research interests, when I am excited about my job.”

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Teaching Effectiveness: The Traditional Classroom vs. The Virtual Classroom

by John Steffa, D.M.A. Department of Music

Since 1998, I have been teaching an online course called Introduction to Music Theory. The content is entirely online and is in the format of an interactive textbook. As course instructor, I have been able to serve an average of 20 students during each of the spring, fall and summer semesters—at first as a remedial course for college music students, and more recently as a university studies elective. Although internet courses have grown in numbers in recent years, much has been said and written questioning the effectiveness of web instruction.

Prior to 1998, I taught the course in a traditional classroom environment, so it provides a rare opportunity to compare conventional instruction to online teaching. Effectiveness of instruction can certainly be measured in any number of ways, but by comparing the two means of informational delivery in this single course I have been able to make some interesting observations regarding teaching effectiveness.

First, the organization of a web-based course is an imperative. For students to find logic to and to understand the sequence of material delivery without the aid of instructor interaction, course objectives must be focused, clear and well organized. I arranged the information for this course as a textbook, and the students are asked to read the “text” during the course of the semester. Javascript is used to enhance interactivity, and students are encouraged to “discover” information with the mouse in a variety of situations. In the conventional classroom, I had a great deal more

flexibility in altering content based on student needs.

Students’ comments and questions are a common means of determining effectiveness of instruction. My classroom environment allows for free student dialogue and exchanges that can lead to immediate feedback regarding the effectiveness of delivery. The internet course allows for feedback in a similar manner. Each page of the course contains an email link to me, allowing students to contact me any time a question or comment may arise. This is regarded as asynchronous communication, and dialogue is certainly not as immediate as it is in the live setting. A discussion board, however, is available to fulfill the need for synchronous classroom discussions, and it provides a forum for students to discuss among themselves and with me.

No significant difference in student test scores has been shown between the classroom version of the course and the web version.

Testing can also help to determine teaching efficiency and effectiveness. The course relies primarily on paper and pencil testing both in the classroom and in the virtual environment. In the classroom students fill out and return an exam within the hour. On the web, I send exams to students in the form of PDF files, as email attachments. They are required to download the exam, print it out and fill it out within 24 hours. No

significant difference in student test scores has been shown between the classroom version of the course and the web version.

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Do You Want Teaching Excellence?

by David L. Fender, Ed.D., CSP Department of Occupational Safety and Health

Teaching excellence—what is it? How do you know when you have seen it? How do you measure it? How do you teach it? These are all questions that come to my mind when I think of teaching excellence.

A quick Google search found 21,300,000 English language hits for teaching excellence. Another interesting thing the search revealed was that most of the first few pages of hits were for university-based operations. Common names were the Center for Teaching Excellence, Academy of Teaching Excellence, Faculty Teaching Excellence Program, and Institute for Teaching Excellence, etc. (By the way, an excellent resource for teaching ideas is the Berkeley Compendium of Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/compendium/>.) So what does this all mean? I would sum it up by saying that apparently teaching excellence is a hot topic and many universities are trying to promote teaching excellence, and some are committing significant resources toward this effort.

So how do we know if we have teaching excellence? Our society today likes to measure everything, so can we measure teaching excellence? My reading of the literature says that yes we can, so then all we have to do is figure out how and what. For example, is it high grades, low grades or a nice bell curve for a class, or are grades irrelevant? How about student evaluations of teachers—surely we can trust the “customer”. The problems with student evaluations would take several

pages to delineate, but even with the problems connected with them, are they useless or can we use them in some way to measure excellence? Should we just use quantitative measures or are qualitative measures better? Can we use the same measures for the physics department as for the English department, or is there something inherently dissimilar about academic fields that require different measures? All of these questions and more must be addressed if we are to properly measure excellence. Not an impossible task but at times a daunting one.

“We will not achieve teaching excellence unless we have the motivation to do what is necessary to achieve it.”

Are there naturally born teachers? I would say yes, just as there are those who seem to have a naturally given gift or ability in a certain area. We can see examples in individuals who we consider natural leaders, scientists, engineers, great thinkers, etc. Does that mean that if you aren’t “gifted” with the “teaching gene” that you can’t be a good teacher? Many years ago from a source I have long since lost I picked up a formula about individual performance. The formula reads: Performance = (Aptitude + Training) X Motivation. All parts of this formula are important. The more natural aptitude you happen to have, the better. And training is valuable to add to your aptitude, but motivation is critical. We have all known students who were intelligent and were very capable of completing college work but they failed or quit. The especially frustrating ones for me were those who seemed to just lack the motivation. It is the

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same for teachers; we will not achieve teaching excellence unless we have the motivation to do what is necessary to achieve it.

Now I don't intend to denigrate the vast amount of research that has been done in the area of teaching excellence, but it seems to be like many areas that are researched in that the more we learn, the more we realize we don't know. That said, we do know a lot about what works and does not work but it takes personal motivation to study and apply it. That means it is up to each teacher to drink from the well of knowledge that we have and then apply it in our own classes and students. Think about it, are you really achieving teaching excellence or could you improve? You and your students deserve nothing less.

■ David Fender is an Assistant Professor in the College of Health Sciences and Human Services. He received his Ed.D. in 2000 from Vanderbilt University and has been at Murray State University for 10 years.

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these things contributed to an improved learning environment.

When I think about the things I have done as I strive towards "teaching excellence", I realize that it's not so much about the mechanics of how we teach, rather it's the spirit in which we teach. The spirit of learning is enhanced by the spirit of sharing. So next time you want to try something new in your classroom—share part of yourself!

■ Maeve McCarthy is an Associate Professor in the College of Science, Engineering and Technology. She received her Ph.D. in 1997 from Rice University and has been at Murray State University for 7 years.



Learning: A Journey, Not a Destination

by David Durr, Ph.D. Department of Economics and Finance

As professional educators we are fortunate indeed. Most of us have the pleasure and good fortune of working in a career that we enjoy and one in which we experience a degree of success every time we step into the classroom.

What makes a “great teacher” great? Much has been written on the subject of what constitutes effective teaching, and how to measure teaching effectiveness. Student ratings and teaching evaluations are tools that are often used to gauge success in these areas. The Center for Teaching Excellence at New York University (www.nyu.edu/cte/white.html#Number1) cites research by Cashin (1995) who found that over 1,500 books and articles have been published on this subject.

Dr. Ken Bain, director of the center, is the author of a book entitled “What the Best College Teachers Do.” For his book, Dr. Bain was recognized by Harvard University Press for an Outstanding Book on Education and Society. The following excerpt from his book provides insight into what he believes constitutes teaching excellence: “The short answer is—it’s not what teachers do, it’s what they understand. Lesson plans and lecture notes matter less than the special way teachers comprehend the subject and value human learning. Whether historians or physicists, in El Paso or St. Paul, the best teachers know their subjects inside and out—but they also know how to engage and challenge students and to provoke impassioned responses. Most of all, they believe two things fervently: that teaching matters and that students can learn.”

“Our objectives in teaching should include the following: to build character, competence, and confidence.”

A survey conducted by the University of Montana Center for Teaching Excellence supports Dr. Bain’s conclusion. In that study students were asked to rank various behaviors/characteristics of instructors in terms of which have the greatest impact on student learning. The researchers identified eighteen behaviors that aid in the learning process. The highest rated behavior was “Instructor knowledge of the subject.” The next four characteristics, in order of importance, were: 2) Respect for students; 3) Prepared for class; 4) Displays genuine love/interest for subject, and 5) Creates a positive learning environment for students.

Probably all of us exhibit some of the aforementioned behaviors in the classroom. As with many professors, my approach to classroom instruction reflects many of the positive teaching styles that I have observed from my colleagues as well as those to which I was exposed as a student. Students are most receptive to learning when they are in a relaxed, unthreatening setting. Additionally, students often respond well to energetic, somewhat animated presentations that depart from the traditional, lecture-style format. In my classes I strive to create such an atmosphere.

The teaching philosophy that I follow is a simple one. I believe that it is our responsibility to implement all of our teaching and educational skills to create a classroom environment in which students want to learn, in which valuable learning skills are acquired,

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and in which students leave feeling like there is still more to learn. In teaching, we should try to inspire, enlighten, and encourage students. Additionally, each student should feel that we are personally concerned about their academic welfare and their future successes.

Our objectives in teaching should include the following: to build character, competence, and confidence. I personally value the opportunity to introduce the students to the exciting and constantly evolving field of finance, including specific areas in investments, portfolio management, corporate finance, and financial planning. Through my efforts I aim to help them better understand the potential career opportunities that are available to accomplished students in fields such as financial planning, financial analysis, portfolio management, and personal investing.

We should also stress the importance of professionalism in business. Students must be encouraged to “go the extra step” in order to be successful. Let us urge them to take pride in all of their work, including homework, exams, and oral and written presentations. In addition, we should counsel the students on being model business citizens. When they leave Murray State University, each person must understand the role of ethics in business and our society.

A poem by Alan Glatthorn succinctly summarizes the role of an effective teacher in the learning process.

*What is a teacher?
A guide, not a guard.*

*What is learning?
A journey, not a destination.*

*What is discovery?
Questioning the answers, not answering the questions.*

*What is the process?
Discovering ideas, not covering content.*

*What is the goal?
Open minds, not closed issues.*

*What is the test?
Being and becoming, not remembering and reviewing.*

*What is the school?
Whatever we choose to make it.*

Let us all strive to enjoy and to make the most of the journey. We are fortunate to be associated with Murray State University. MSU enjoys a tremendous reputation as a student-centered institution, truly committed to its students. MSU allows us to wholly experience our true calling as professional educators.

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- David Durr is an Associate Professor and Bauernfeind Endowed Chair in Investment Management in the College of Business and Public Affairs. He received his Ph.D. in 1995 from the University of North Texas and has been at Murray State University for 2 years.



A Quiet Form of Research

by Sharon Gill, Ed.D. Department of Early Childhood and Elementary Education

What is teaching excellence? James Britton (1987) described good teaching as “a quiet form of research.” Effective teaching, he said,

depends upon the concern of every teacher for the rational by which he or she works...This requires that every lesson should be for the teacher an inquiry, some further discovery... and that time to reflect, draw inferences and plan further inquiry is essential. (p. 115)

In *Reflective Teaching: An Introduction*, Zeichner and Liston (1996) assert that “it is through reflection on our teaching that we become more skilled, more capable, and in general better teachers” (p. xvii). I believe that reflective teaching, then—taking time to plan, to think about what we are doing and why, and to reflect on the result—is an important component of teaching excellence.

I learned a lot about the value of reflecting on my teaching while doing my doctoral dissertation research, which I conducted after I came to Murray State University. I had become interested in using writing and speaking activities to help students in my reading methods class understand course concepts. I expected to try out some writing and speaking activities and to find out which worked well. What I learned, however, from analyzing students’ work, interviewing students, and reflecting on my teaching, was not what I expected. I found that my students and I had different views of learning. They tended to see learning as memorizing information and writing as supplying the “correct” answer, rather than a way to think and learn. They often found ways to complete the writing and speaking assignments without really

engaging in thinking. I realized that to help my students learn from the writing and speaking activities (and to help them understand that learning is more than memorizing and supplying correct answers) I needed to provide more demonstrations of how to engage in thinking through these activities, and I needed to give students more feedback.

While we can’t possibly do in-depth analyses of everything that we do in our classes, we can strive to be more reflective in our teaching. What is reflective teaching? Zeichner and Liston (1996, p. 6) describe five key features of reflective teaching. A reflective teacher:

- examines, frames, and attempts to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice;
- is aware of and questions the assumptions and values he or she brings to teaching;
- is attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which he or she teaches;
- takes part in curriculum development and is involved in school change efforts; and
- takes responsibility for his or her own professional development.

We reflect when we design the activities for our courses each semester, when we review our programs, and when we design new courses. We also reflect when we meet with colleagues to discuss common problems and share ideas for solutions. I want to suggest a few simple ideas for becoming more reflective in our teaching.

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First: Take more time to plan. While we all go through the lesson-planning process in some form—informally “in our heads” or more formally in writing—I have found that when I take the time to write a formal lesson plan, specifying what I want my students to learn and what activities I will use to accomplish this each day, I teach a better lesson.

Second: Make reflection part of the planning process. In the College of Education we train future teachers to use a lesson planning process that includes not only goals and activities, but also includes reflecting after the lesson on what students learned and how to improve or refine the lesson. Taking just a few minutes to reflect on paper lets us identify problems with the lesson, think of better ways to teach it, and perhaps most importantly put our thoughts in permanent form, so we can go back and review them when we are putting our courses together for the next semester.

Third: Organize a group of colleagues to discuss teaching or a particular concern.

Fourth: Choose a question to explore in your classroom, and keep a journal of your reflections.

Fifth: Consider conducting research on your teaching. Choose an assignment or issue to

investigate and collect data systematically. Present your work at a conference.

Whether you conduct formal research or make your teaching a more “quiet” form of research, taking time to become more reflective is one way to work toward teaching excellence.

Whether you conduct formal research or make your teaching a more “quiet” form of research, taking time to become more reflective is one way to work toward teaching excellence.

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■ Sharon Gill is an Associate Professor in the College of Education. She received her Ed.D. in 1996 from the University of Cincinnati and has been at Murray State University for 11 years.



What's in a Name?

by Pat Williams, Ph.D. Department of Agricultural Science

It was the first day of AGR 140 Plant Science on August 25, 2005. Class started at 10:30, and at 10:33 I walked around the built-in lab table that separates me from the class. After my normal first day greetings, I proceeded to introduce all 32 students by name to each other from memory. Chris called that *creepy*. I guess I had to take that as a compliment...you take them where you can get them. To the student it must have looked like I already knew the names (I only knew five), but to me it was a long-practiced skill I have honed since my first TA position when I was 20 years old.

I wake up most mornings long before the rooster crows...(had to throw in an agricultural metaphor to cover the stereotypes) and my mind starts racing with everything that needs to be accomplished that day. Being the only horticulture faculty on campus, I have a lot to juggle from running the greenhouses and other farm programs, handling my university responsibilities, and getting ready for class. As of Spring 2006, I will have been responsible for teaching 19 different classes outright, creating six new classes in agriculture since arriving in 2001, and playing a part in three other classes. So getting ready for classes each semester is never the status quo. Oh, I also manage a greenhouse staff of up to 10 students a semester and have a handful of graduate students and all my undergraduate advisees. So how does the actual teaching excellence occur?

It starts with that name. Kalen just transferred from the University of Kentucky to complete his senior year at Murray State University and play baseball for us. I was in my greenhouse supervisors meeting the second day of class, and he arrived early and took a seat. My staff and I were eating, and while heating my lunch, I asked him what was the big difference so far between the universities. He simply stated, "You already know my name."

Each day I believe in three interactions for my classes. The first is that I can teach my students; the second is the students can teach each other; and the third and most important is my students can teach me.

Teaching excellence is not about being the smartest one in the room. It's about caring for each individual sitting in front of you. It's about striving to make an educational difference in each of their lives. As part of my fall line-up I'm teaching two freshman-level classes, and I have one outcome goal for each first day of class. It's actually a simple one...to have each of my new students in some way talk about me outside of class to

someone else. It doesn't matter if they thought I was creepy or crazy or so off the wall that they have to call home—it's about the bond I formed when I called them by name. It's about them wanting to come back the second day to see what our class is all about. That's when you know you're going to succeed. The students know they are actual persons with names and not just another faceless young person in college.

I have a simple teaching philosophy that I practice each day. Due to time constraints I don't read any

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teaching journals or books, so I don't know if someone has coined the term before, but I call it a *Teaching Triad*. Each day I believe in three interactions for my classes. The first is that I can teach my students; the second is the students can teach each other; and the third and most important is my students can teach me. They teach me so many things. I wasn't raised on a farm, but our students that raise food for you and me have taught and continue to teach me a lot about farming. Sometimes they teach me about life as well. The second day of AGR 140, I asked who believes they can change the world. There was some mumbling, but I distinctly heard that someone believed he could. After a second query, Jarod said he could. I thought he was going to say he would develop a new crop that would cure all the world's health problems, but he said it could be as simple as not choosing to drink and drive...thus saving some innocent family from great loss. This third aspect plays out time and time again in class. Dianna is in my AGR 160 Horticulture Science class. She is a non-traditional student and as everyone was introducing themselves the first day, she said she had been through one career in life and wanted a change. She's here studying habitat conservation, construction and restoration thus making my class an elective for her BIS degree. On the second day of class I used her story to reach the rest of my students on the real purpose of their college education...to find a career that you can feel passionate about each and every day you wake up. I applaud the Diannas of the world who are not afraid to make a difference in their own lives. And as a teacher you can't be afraid to

make a difference in your students. By listening, I do learn, and everyone in the triad benefits.

I stood in front of 16 Agriculture Education majors in the AGR 360 Greenhouse Management and Production lab on that first Thursday and asked, "So you want to be like me?" We then proceeded to discuss the traits of a good teacher. Dr. Morgan would have been proud of them. They used terms like passionate, sincere, knowledgeable, and yes, Amber even said fun. Most of them were in my lab because a high school teacher had made a difference in their lives. We have such tremendous responsibility to the young people in our classes that sometimes it's just plain scary. We have to be educators, but at other times we need to be surrogate parents, role models, and yes, at times even cheerleaders and entertainers.

When do we start making a difference in their lives? A couple desks in front of Dianna was a young woman named Erin from the other Nashville. She wasn't sure what direction her college career was going to take; it was either between her declared major of agriculture education or horticulture. By day's end Erin had officially changed majors to horticulture. We didn't even really talk about horticulture the first day, so what did I do to change her life? I simply cared that she was in my class, and I let her know she was important enough to know her name.

My favorite writing is *What is Success?* by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The last few lines state: *to know even*

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one life has breathed easier because you have lived; this is to have succeeded.

Teaching excellence is getting to know your students and making a personal difference in their lives and letting them make one in yours. To have the Joshs call you Doc long after they have graduated and phone when they get the new job in Florida. It's the Connallys that allow your daughter to be the flower girl at her wedding and let you be in the hospital room hours after the birth of her first child. It's the Philips that just call to say hi and ask if you want to play golf. It's the Kellys and Jills who support you when you arrive at a new university and believe in you from day one. It's the non-traditional students like Kath that grow every day and show everyone around her that being a good, honest person is the best thing in life. It's about the Sarahs who make sure they come see you when they hear you're in the store and have that ear-to-ear smile. It's about the Erics who open their doors in Macon, GA to let your family stay while on their vacation trip back and forth to Disney World. It's about the Justins who shine beyond everyone's expectations and become the outstanding student in Agriculture. It's the Jasons who will simply be great horticulturists and change the appearance of our world. It's about the Kris-Anns who come to MSU wanting an associate's degree and end up starting their master's this semester after receiving national acclaim...and who also think enough to nominate you for awards I probably don't deserve.

I have never been to a senior breakfast before this past May 4th...I'm always teaching that morning.

(Sorry, Dr. Brockway. I just have to give the underclassmen one last lecture.) I was impressed to see all the students there, but I was also more impressed to see faculty all dressed up waiting on the students. *(There is another example of teaching excellence!)* I was sitting with my eight seniors simply because they wanted me there. The next thing I know my name was called out as the Student Government Association's Max Carmen Outstanding Teaching of the Year recipient. Few events have humbled me more. Besides my wedding to Pati, the birth of my daughter Tara, the death of my parents, and having Dr. Z drape the hood over my head on the Texas A&M University stage, this will be a memory I have until my mind no longer functions. Some there probably said who is that? Others said it's the horticulture guy! All I know is after being here just four years, I can't rest on reaching the top, otherwise I have only one place to go.

As I look up and see the photos of my students and me at graduation above my desk at home as I write this run-on sentence Saturday morning at 5:30A.M., I realize why I teach. It's for the students who want a photo with me in my long black dress and French pastry hat after graduation where I hollered out their names from the front few rows because I wanted to be there and did not have to be there. It's for the parents who are so happy you have taken care of and guided their sons and daughters through college that they give you a ham. It's for the first day of classes when you meet your new freshman and hope that one day they will want to take a photo with you as well.

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In closing I want to say a couple of thanks. Thanks to my peers and bosses in the School of Agriculture who, despite our few numbers and many students, continue to make a difference each day, and thanks also for allowing me the freedom to oversee our horticulture program. Thanks to CTLT for your continued commitment to improve teaching here and for bringing in Dr. Ricky Cox. And lastly, thanks to Dr. Cox for giving me all those gentle reminders that I

volunteered many weeks ago to write this article for him. Writing this article brought on a flood of wonderful memories I have gathered at Murray State University in my short stay, and wow, what a wonderful way to start my day.

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Student feedback, as previously suggested, is a valuable means of determining course effectiveness. Traditional classroom instruction typically offers, at semester's end, course and instructor assessments by providing standardized evaluation tools and making available written comment sheets in such a way that students may remain anonymous. The university also provides that service to students for web courses. When I present evaluations in a manner that is positive and suggestive that positive outcomes will result, students tend to take advantage of each method of evaluation whether it is processed in the classroom or on the internet.

skills that may help to replace visual communication found in the real classroom.

The internet can be an effective environment for informational dissemination. As was suggested earlier, the effectiveness of instruction can be measured in any number of ways, and when comparing the live classroom environment to the virtual environment of the internet, primary differences become apparent and should be noted when attempting to teach effectively. The primary strength of classroom instruction—missing in the virtual environment—can be found in the live, personal interaction between instructor and student. The primary strength of web instruction—often missing in the classroom environment—can be found in the lack of temporal constraints. Students can work at an individual pace, during any time of day or night.

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