

Roundtable

Center for
Teaching,
Learning &
Technology

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Roundtable Highlights

Welcome to the third edition of the TLT Roundtable.

The Roundtable is published by the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology and supports faculty development activities across the campus.

You will notice that this edition has been heavily influenced by the Professional Communications Initiative (PCI). This faculty inspired and managed movement has now held three symposia on topics that support the first characteristic of the Murray State graduate.

This first characteristic identifies a student who is able to: *“Engage in mature, independent thought and express that thought effectively in oral and written communications.”* It has long been a goal of the university to provide a baccalaureate experience that produces graduates who embody the “characteristics” objectives.

We are also introducing a new “Reflections” column. As reported in an earlier edition, we are pleased to welcome Heath Keller to the faculty development arena. Heath has responsibility for supporting faculty in teaching and learning activities. He will use this space to reflect on pedagogical strategies and to report on the scholarship of teaching.

Update on the Professional Communications Symposia

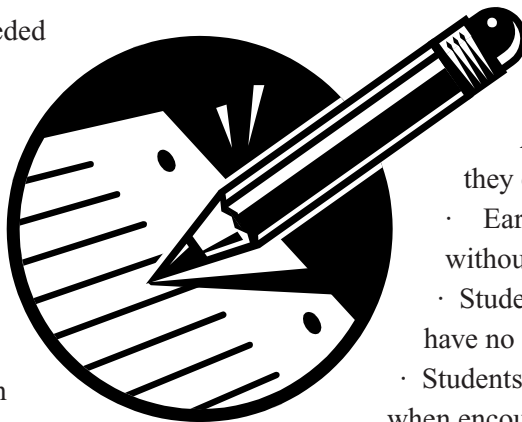
The PCI group has continued to meet to discuss methods of improving students' communication skills.

Freshman Composition Symposium: (November 28)

November's meeting focused on structural solutions—specifically how to build upon the foundations of ENG 101 and 102. Well over 50 faculty braved a cold rain to attend the symposium. Following a brief presentation by Dr. Gina Claywell, Director of Freshman Composition, small group sessions were formed with facilitators from the English and Philosophy department.

Notes from the Symposium:

- Better communication is needed between English faculty and faculty in upper division courses. Students appear to believe they will never need to write during their career at school—or beyond. Consequently, they see writing skills as important only in their English class. If English faculty could point to major writing assignments required in the student's major, it might help reinforce the future importance to the student.
- Many faculty were surprised to hear that ENG 101 included an analysis paper. They believed (from student accounts) that students had never written a paper requiring analysis.
- Plagiarism—Universally identified as a significant problem. Students appear to have had little experience in appropriate citation despite being taught documentation in ENG 102!
- Many faculty noted that the best way to improve students' writing skills is to demand writing in assignments. Large classes create obvious obstacles in increasing writing assignments.



How some faculty are addressing the problem:

- Edit only the first page of an assignment. Make content-based statements throughout the remainder of the paper.
- Gradually increase the length of written assignments throughout the semester—allowing students to grow into faculty expectations.
- Require proposals before major papers to require students to organize thoughts.
- Provide samples of writing expectations.
- Deduct 10% of final grade for grammar.

Non-Native Speakers (and Writers) in the University Classroom: (February 6)

Latricia Trites and Sue Sroda led the group as it considered ways to improve communications with international students. They reminded participants that non-native English speakers come from a variety of cultures. Many are trying to adjust to significant cultural differences in US classrooms such as teacher/student roles, purpose of office hours, and American classroom activities. Examples they cited:

- Early specialization may have left students without training or exposure to broad issues.
- Students may resist group assignments as they have no experience with collaborative learning.
- Students may not ask questions in class even when encouraged. They may not want to embarrass the instructor with the implication that the instructions were inadequate.
- Many other cultures provide no writing instruction whatsoever. Students may have had no exposure to American rhetorical conventions such as thesis statements, introductions or conclusions.

Sroda and Trites offered suggestions that included:

- When you are asked to repeat a statement - repeat the statement - don't rephrase it (Nine out of ten US speakers will rephrase the question).
- Provide a detailed explanation of your grading rubric.
- Use rhetorical markers in lectures ("This is important").
- Support oral instruction with written and/or visual stimuli (not oral instructions alone).

In the Press

In our recent poll, we asked faculty to identify topics of professional interest in improving teaching and learning. We'll use this space to review the research in some of the areas you identified.

Evaluating Internet Resource Sources

The Internet has had a huge impact on the way information is stored, how it is retrieved and unfortunately for researchers—how it is used. In an analogy used by Robert Harris in “Evaluating Internet Research Sources”, Harris asks his readers to picture the magazine section at a supermarket. If we grab a magazine without reading the titles we are as likely to get the National Enquirer as a respected academic journal—more likely, actually. If the supermarket were to permit anyone in town to print up personal pamphlets the problem would be magnified. In this case the reader’s blind grab could produce political campaign material, family albums and other material that received no approval before it was made public.

Harris makes the obvious comparison of the supermarket to the Internet. Information on the Internet is under constant change. It is available in all levels of accuracy, and is created for many different purposes. Helping students find and evaluate information is a significant challenge in all arenas of life, but is particularly important in academia.

To help students evaluate what they find on the Web, Harris has constructed the CARS Checklist for resource source evaluation:

Credibility

trustworthy source, author's credentials, evidence of quality control, known or respected authority, organizational support.

Goal: an authoritative source, a source that supplies some good evidence that allows you to trust it.

Accuracy

up to date, factual, detailed, exact, comprehensive, audience and purpose reflect intentions of completeness and accuracy.

Goal: a source that is correct today (not yesterday), a source that gives the whole truth.

Reasonableness

fair, balanced, objective, reasoned, no conflict of interest, absence of fallacies or slanted tone.

Goal: a source that engages the subject thoughtfully and reasonably, concerned with the truth.

Support

listed sources, contact information, available corroboration, claims supported, documentation supplied.

Goal: a source that provides convincing evidence for the claims made, a source you can triangulate (find at least two other sources that support it).

For the full text of Harris' article see VirtualSalt. 17 Nov. 1997. 17 Oct 2000 <<http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>>.

Reflections...



by Heath Keller

After attending the Professional Communication Symposium II (improving students' writing skills), I was inspired by the discussion that took place. In the small group portion, a colleague suggested including "on-demand" writing assignments throughout the semester. I decided to try this activity to incorporate some writing experience for my students and give me feedback about my course. So, during the next meeting of my Principles of Management (MGT 350) course, my 50+ students performed an on-demand writing activity. I instructed my class to compose an essay about what they had "learned" during the semester. Specifically, I told them to imagine that they were comparing notes with a friend from another school who was also taking a Principals of Management class. After many confused looks, some rolling of the eyes, and several sighs, they began to write.

I was curious what parts of the class the students would recall in this surprise activity. What I found was remarkable in its consistency throughout the class. Student after student confirmed that the things that they remembered were not WHAT I had taught, but HOW I had taught it. Students didn't remember what I had said; they remembered what they had said. They didn't remember what I had done; they remembered

what they had done. Although not all my students put it the same way, the vast majority of what they reported followed this theme. When reporting what they had learned, students rarely mentioned material that was only covered in lecture or asked in a passive (multiple choice/true false) test question. *Students retained what they had written about—or what they had done.*

“When reporting what they had learned, students rarely mentioned material that was only covered in lecture or asked in a passive test question. Students retained what they had written about—or what they had done.”

This didn't really come as a big surprise. I don't think that it is any secret that we all remember the things in which we are actively involved. Writing, interacting with groups, and actively applying concepts requires a greater level of engagement, which results in a much higher level of learning. Additionally, writing helps bind the curriculum together. When composing an essay, students are using experiences and knowledge that have been acquired throughout their education and their lives, not just in one course. To allow students to draw from past experience and move toward new experiences is a very exciting exercise. When provided (or prodded) with the opportunity, students like to share what they know, what they've done, where they've been, and most

importantly where they would like to go. As educators, the way that we approach guiding that experience can provide them with the information/knowledge/wisdom to make it a profitable journey.



The Bulletin Board

Campus Instructional News

Call(s) for Proposals

The annual *Teaching and Technology Forum* is expanding. Forum sessions will now address a wide range of teaching and learning issues that include, but are not limited to, technology.

We are seeking presenters, moderators and roundtable participants for the Forum to be held **April 24–26, 2002** (Wednesday – Friday). The Forum is sponsored by the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology and the Office of the Provost, and provides faculty the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with colleagues. As in the past, presenters double their chances to win one of the doorprizes (such as a notebook computer). To submit a proposal send linda.miller@murraystate.edu a sentence or two noting the area in which you would like to participate. This year we plan to provide more Roundtable opportunities so if you have experience or interest in a particular topic let us know. We'll structure sessions based on response. **Proposal deadline is March 4.**

Faculty will also soon be receiving the Call for Proposals for the Kentucky conference “Innovations in Teaching & Learning: Meeting 21st Century Challenges”. The conference, sponsored by the CPE and the Kentucky Virtual University, will be held May 20–21 in Louisville. The Provost's office will again provide funding for MSU faculty to present at the conference. Consider repeating your presentation for this statewide audience. For details, contact Linda Miller x3773.

For campus news and resources, turn to

<http://racernet.murraystate.edu>

MSU Technology Cup

For the third year, MSU will host competitions in which students present an assignment in which they have used technology. Competitions will be held at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Each college will hold an undergraduate semifinals competition in which Deans select the college representative and winner of the \$100 purse. Judges from local business and industry will confer the final prize of a digital camera. Faculty of winning students will also be recognized. **Application deadline is March 15.** The competitions will be held during Scholars' Week, April 22–26. For details contact the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology x2535 or see: http://campus.murraystate.edu/forum/tech_cup.htm



Electronic Submission of Tenure/ Promotion Materials

The Provost's office has recently appointed a committee to explore the issues surrounding the electronic submission of tenure and promotion materials. Dr. Bill Price has convened this group which is examining the complexities of electronic submission including: platform standards (Mac and PC), format, organization, committee review, security, training, timing and collegiate traditions. The committee's objective is to provide guidelines for faculty who wish to submit materials electronically. **Faculty will NOT be required to include materials this way.** The committee anticipates that recommendations will be available for applicants during the 2002/03 academic year.

Bulletin Board announcements continued on page 6

Instructional Development Grants

The Provost has initiated a new program to provide funding for instructional improvement initiatives. A new faculty development committee, chaired by Tim Todd, has been established to assist in identifying and supporting faculty development issues. This committee has developed broad guidelines for this program. Proposals will be reviewed by a faculty committee with representation from each academic college. For details and to apply online, select Technical Support from RacerNet (<http://racernet.murraystate.edu>).

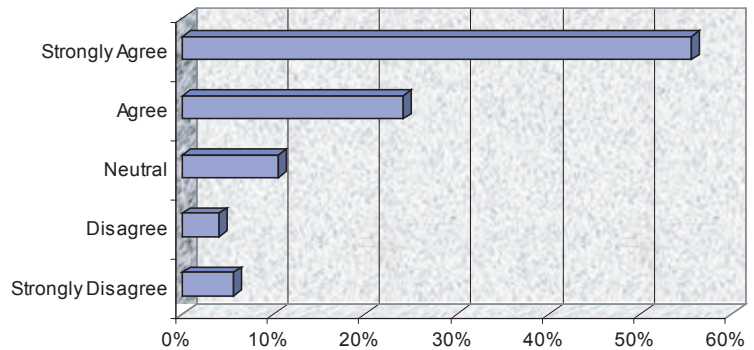
Application Deadline is March 1.

Library's New Server Is a Hit

Beginning this spring semester MSU students, faculty and staff are able to access the library's entire collection of electronic databases from off-campus and off the university network. Since mid-January when a new server was installed more than 6,180 hits have been logged by off-campus users. This new pass-through proxy server offers the same seamless access to the library's long list of electronic library resources, as is available on campus. The databases currently receiving the most attention are Academic Search Premier, CINAHL (nursing literature), Business Source Premier, and PsychINFO. These and other popular electronic resources make available full-text journal articles, indexes, abstract sources, dictionaries, and encyclopedias to all MSU-registered users regardless of physical location.

To access the library's electronic resources start at the Reference Shelf page of the University Libraries' home page. The University Libraries' home page may also be found by clicking on the Libraries button of the Murray State University home page or by clicking on the Libraries link on the RacerNet home page. The electronic resources are located in the Reference Shelf area arranged by subject or alphabetically on the Databases A - Z page. Log-in using your last name as user name and the last four digits of your

My discipline has been significantly impacted by technology changes over the last 5 years.



Source: Fall 2001 MSU Faculty Survey conducted by TLT.

Graph represents 248 responses.

social security number as password. All currently enrolled students are automatically registered in the library's system. Faculty and staff who have not registered with the library must do so before obtaining access to the electronic resources. If you need help logging in or need to register for access, contact the Reference Desk by phone at (270)762-2053 or email at reference@murraystate.edu.

KYVU Online Excellence Awards

The Kentucky Virtual University is seeking applications/nominations for KYVU Online Excellence Awards. The awards will include cash and state recognition. Anyone who has ever delivered a KYVU course is encouraged to apply. Awards will be based on categories of excellence (not entire courses). So if you have developed an outstanding assignment, a good assessment activity or a technique for encouraging interaction in a course offered via KYVU, then consider applying. A list of sample categories as well as details on the application process will be available soon. Contact Linda Miller x3773 for details.



Under Merlin's Hat

Campus Technology News

News from the CIO

by Janice Thomasson

Transitions

As you may know, Jerry Summerville, the IS Manager of Operations and Systems Programming, announced his retirement effective February 1, 2002. We will miss Jerry and wish him all the best in his post-retirement endeavors (we hear he will be very busy with his business). We were fortunate in quickly identifying a successor, Mark Belva. Mark comes to us from Metropolitan Nashville General Hospital, where he served as Information Systems Operations Manager. A resident of Hopkinsville, Mark is a Murray State graduate. Welcome aboard, Mark!

Help Desk News

Previously, the Help Desk service involved activity in two IS departments. To effect productivity gains, we are pleased to announce that these areas have joined forces and are now in one location under the leadership of Brenda Rowland and Karen Dowdy. Customers should continue to call x2346 for assistance. Questions about service can be directed to Brenda Rowland at x2385.

Operations

The Computer Center would like to thank you for your patience and assistance in the past several months. We are continuing to make every effort to provide accurate and prompt services. Please help us by requesting your jobs before 3:00 p.m. to give our operations staff time to setup and sort the jobs to be run that night. We understand that emergencies arise that need special attention. In these circumstances we can make adjustments if you let us know ahead of time.

Administrative Computing

Administrative computing is engaged in several long-range projects. Of particular significance to faculty are updates to the PIN system. These changes will permit student access to their current housing information, academic advisor, and residential college. Administrative computing is also engaged in planning for a registration advising control system. While system specifics have yet to be fully developed, this system will assure that students have conferred with their advisor prior to registering for class.

Red Dot?

Official campus web coordinators are awaiting the arrival of the Red Dot software for managing official campus web pages. These are pages that are linked from the external web site (www.murraystate.edu) and that present our "official" face to alumni, prospective students, and other electronic visitors to our campus. Because this site represents an official view of the campus it is important that it present an integrated, consistent image to our guests. The external campus site is managed by the development office as an official publication of the university. Staffing and training issues for the new program have slightly delayed the implementation of the new system. Tony Powell, web manager for the external web site (<http://www.murraystate.edu>) reports that he hopes to be able to use the new software by July 1.

Note: RacerNet, (<http://racernet.murraystate.edu>), MSU's internal web site, is a resource for the **campus** community. It aggregates information of interest to campus users such as administrative forms, Blackboard and PIN links, campus announcements, course pages, lab hours and locations, as well as other campus specific information. RacerNet is managed by the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology. Red Dot is not required on pages linked from RacerNet.

Adobe Users

We are currently exploring an arrangement with Adobe to purchase their product line at dramatically reduced prices. Negotiations have not been finalized, but if you are interested, contact Hal Rice x3929 for details.

Office XP Incompatibilities

As a word of caution, campus technical units have encountered some “issues” with the new Microsoft Office XP software. One troublesome issue is the PowerPoint application. There seem to be compatibility problems with earlier versions. Microsoft has added some new features, but the program may be more cumbersome for new users to learn, and will take some effort for users of previous versions to become comfortable with the tools.

Another issue to consider is the incompatibility of PowerPoint XP presentations within the Blackboard system. We have had reports from across the country that XP will not display in the Blackboard system. The workaround involves creating Acrobat PDF files from the PowerPoint presentation. Converting the PowerPoint file to PDF is the only way to be sure that students have access to the presentation. TLT is in the process of acquiring a copy of the Office XP software for testing and resolving these and other associated issues that may arise.

See the Roundtable online:

Go to Racernet,
click the Technical Support tab, and
select the TLT homepage.

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