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EDITORIAL

By Idahlynn Karre

E-MAIL

AS A COMMUNICATION MEDIUM: PITFALLS AND PROMISES

I n today's institutions of higher education, it is critical that organizational leaders possess knowledge and skill in communication. We constantly communicate with those around us, whether we are communicating with our students, colleagues, or the larger community in which our colleges and universities are situated. Indeed, the Principle of Inevitability suggests that communication is a certainty, whether we intend it or not *(Karre, 2006)*. There is no doubt that much of our communication is intentional and purposeful. Yet often the manner in which we communicate and the content of our perceived message is not what we intend. Moreover, with the increasing technological capabilities of available mediums and our motivation to expand the horizons of education and communication, it is important that we consider the strengths and limitations of our medium of choice.

Shannon Blanton

While electronic mail offers many advancements and opportunities for communication, it is widely appreciated by practitioners and scholars alike that the medium has its limitations. Much of the concern about e-mail, however, has focused on its impact on increasing workload, the legal implications regarding what is written and to whom it is sent, and its impact on productivity and efficiency. Yet a major dilemma with e-mail arises from its potential to corrupt an institution's interpersonal communications.

In my experience as a department chair, I have repeatedly recognized the difficulties of interpersonal communication through e-mail. While all communication embodies the Principle of Content and Relationship (Karre, 2006), e-mail messages often leave individuals worrying about not only the direct meaning of the content of the message but also the underlying relational tones of the exchange. For instance, not long ago I sent an e-mail to my Dean asking for his approval of a job offer that I wanted to extend. He e-mailed that he was "uncomfortable" with the offer. I initially interpreted his response as a refusal of the basic terms of the offer and was perplexed as to the relational implications of his decision. When I met with him in person a few days later to discuss it further, I learned that it was not the terms per se with which he had a problem so much as the way they were expressed in the letter. In person, we were able to easily resolve the issue to our mutual satisfaction.

Perhaps a similar situation has happened to you, where either you sent a message that was not perceived as you intended or you received a message and attached a meaning to it that differed from what the sender anticipated. So, what are the pitfalls and limitations of e-mail as a mode of communication? And how can use of this communication medium affect oureffectiveness as organizational leaders?

Limitations of E-Mail

Use of electronic mail has proliferated in higher education as we increasingly rely upon e-mail as a primary means of communication with one another. Indeed, it has been argued that during this century, e-mail may even surpass voice as the dominant interpersonal telecommunications medium *(Negraponte, 1995)*. Undoubtedly, e-mail as a communication medium poses great possibilities. However, it also embodies significant limitations as it has been shown to encourage miscommunication and the loss of intention and context.

Social Presence

Multipurpose interactions, casual encounters, and unplanned conversations promote familiarity and trust as individuals learn about the concerns, personalities, and work processes of others. In the absence of this social fabric, individuals are more likely to question intentions and misperceive actions. Similarly, a lack of familiarity and trust is associated with increased conflict about respective roles and responsibilities *(Hinds and Bailey, 2003)*.

Technological mediums differ in their impact on relational outcomes. Social presence theory contends that interpersonal and group processes are hindered when individuals communicate through a medium that reduces the sense of "being there" with each other. In short, reduced social presence impairs interpersonal relations *(Hinds and Bailey, 2003; Short, Williams, and Christie, 1976)*.

Building on these ideas, others have argued that technology reduces social cues which may affect the nature of communication. As social context becomes less visible, individuals often lose awareness that they are engaged in social interaction, may display less inhibited behaviors, and are less likely to share relational information than people who interact face-to-face.

As interactions become depersonalized, individuals tend to be more competitive, are less likely to achieve consensus, and have greater difficulty in developing a shared group identity.

(Hinds and Bailey, 2003; Purdy, Nye, and Balakrishnan, 2000; Sproull and Kiesler, 1991; Straus and McGrath, 1994).

Media Richness

Technological mediums also differ in their ability to reduce ambiguity and facilitate shared meaning. Media richness theory contends that a medium's information richness is based on its ability to be personalized, provide feedback, and quickly synthesize complex information *(Daft and Lengel, 1986)*. Media that communicate great richness of information tend to have a high cue variety that conveys a wide range of meaning–such as physical presence, body gestures, voice inflection, and words.

Some technological mediums, such as e-mail, have difficulty in conveying context and intention as they allow few cues to be shared between participants. Vital contextual information is typically not transmitted, such as the background behind decisions, alternative points of view, or reasons why a person does not respond *(Malhotra and Majchrzak, 2005)*. E-mail similarly lacks critical nonverbal information that is normally used to determine what an individual really means, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and eye gaze. According to Albert Mehrabian, a psychology professor at UCLA, 55% of meaning in an interaction is conveyed by facial and body language, 38% from vocal inflection, and only 7% from the words themselves *(Wellner, 2005)*. With e-mail, participants struggle to establish a common understanding of each other's messages and often misinterpret what others say (or do not say).

Consequently, e-mail can cultivate an environment that is ripe for misattribution of motives and behaviors and can make it difficult to develop a shared context *(Clark, 1996; Fussell and Krauss, 1992)*. Individuals may retain different norms as to what behaviors and expressions are appropriate. Moreover, if individuals differ in their understandings of an issue, conflict is more likely to occur and more difficult to resolve *(Brehmer, 1976; Jehn, 1995)*.

Conflict Prone – Along these lines, research has shown that individuals are more likely to instigate conflict via e-mail and that conflicts arising from e-mail are longer in duration and more intense than in-person disagreements. In other words, e-mail is susceptible to the negative dimension of the Principle of Punctuation *(Karre, 2006)* as it can facilitate regressive spirals in communication. As e-mail is largely constrained to just words, messages are more likely to be misunderstood than a face-to-face conversation. Moreover, absent immediate tangible reminders of group communication norms, people are generally less inhibited in their e-mail communications and more prone to self-disclosure *(Sproull and Kiesler, 1986)*.

While greater expressiveness can create a more open communication, researchers have also found that individuals tend not to censor their comments and are less likely to accommodate the preferences of others. Indeed, comparing e-mail to face-to-face communication, studies have found e-mail messages to be blunt with added swearing and insults *(Wellner, 2005)*. This expression of affective conflict hinders overall performance due to the hostility, anxiety, and energy expended over emotional disagreement *(Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin, 1999)* and the erosion of interpersonal communication and relationships.

Information Transfer - Another problem with e-mail is that messages can be unevenly distributed if individuals either consciously or accidentally withhold communication from others. Similarly, individuals may neglect to share information that they alone hold. Indeed, studies have shown that despite features that support inclusion, e-mail is prone to facilitate exclusion of individuals, either through sender intent or mistake *(Cramton, 2001)*. Thus, in terms of the Principle of Symmetry and Asymmetry *(Karre, 2006)*, e-mail often propagates an "unequal" communication status among individuals within the organization.

This can produce a number of problems as some individuals may be operating without complete information while others assume that information has been shared with all. Confusion, conflict, and misinterpretation of intention can result as individuals are more likely to attribute miscommunication to each other than to the nature of the technological medium. Furthermore, unintentional withholding of information may occur since it is more difficult to send and receive cues about what information is needed when

communicating through e-mail *(Hollingshead, 1996)*. E-mail can also affect the importance that individuals attribute to various pieces of information. One study found that despite the importance the sender attributed to various issues in a single e-mail, the recipients often attached different levels of importance to the issues *(Cramton, 2001)*. Consequently, some issues did not receive the consideration that the sender intended—which often led to dissatisfaction and misunderstanding.

Strategies for Using E-mail

Our perception of both the content and relationship within a communication exchange affects our responsive behavior and our ability to develop a common understanding for further discourse. Given the significance of e-mail as a medium for communication, it is very important to develop strategies that take into account its limitations.

Simple Content – Use e-mail only to send and respond to simple information, and hold a real conversation for anything complex or sensitive. As the density of a message increases, the information processing requirements increase as well. Under such conditions, the usefulness of e-mail decreases. In their recent best seller, Crucial Conversations, *Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler (2002)* focus on discussions where the stakes are high, there are differences in opinion, and emotions are strong. **They argue that when a conversation is crucial, as opposed to casual, we are typically on our worst behavior. For these types of conversations that require many cues, it is particularly important to avoid hiding behind our e-mail and instead rely on in-person communication.**

No E-mail Friday – Sara Roberts, the president of Roberts Golden Consulting firm, proposes a novel but straightforward way to reduce the relational problems associated with the overuse of e-mail. In her company, employees use e-mail during the first part of the week but largely refrain from doing so on Friday *(Wellner, 2005)*. Indeed, studies have shown that by making intermittent telephone calls, rather than solely using e-mail, colleagues can develop better relational outcomes *(Markus, 1994)*. In higher education, we too can

benefit from giving e-mail a rest one day a week and picking up the phone or walking down the hall to hold a conversation…and build a relationship.

No Criticizing – Have you ever sent an e-mail that you wished you had not? According to the Principle of Irreversibility *(Karre, 2006)*, once we have communicated a message it remains communicated—even if we try to amend, counteract, or diminish the effects of our message. It is not possible to "un-communicate" an imprudent message. E-mail, which is often unintentionally harsh, can escalate misattributions. Moreover, it is far too easy for conflicts waged via e-mail to spin out of control. Therefore, it is important to refrain from using e-mail to censure others. Such is company policy at MSCO, a marketing firm in New York, where employees are not allowed to use their e-mail to criticize each other *(Wellner, 2005)*. Instead, for critical conversations, we should use the phone or meet in person.

#!@?!

Periodic Check-Ins – E-mail can contribute to a tendency among members of higher education to retreat into our individual academic silos and remain isolated from others in our community. Hence, it is important to periodically check-in with your colleagues and hold a face-to-face conversation. Plan one or two times a week where you make a point to touch-base and converse face-to-face with co-workers, even if only for a few minutes. By increasing the frequency and length of in-person meetings, we can reduce distance (whether spatial or psychological) between ourselves and work towards maintaining relationships and enhancing communication.

Establish E-mail Protocol – For the times when you use e-mail, there are a number of ways to enhance its effectiveness:

Emphasize clarity – Evaluate your e-mail message, from grammar to nuance, and consider ways it which it could be misinterpreted. Ask another colleague to review your message and look for any "red flags."

Seek verification – Provide an opportunity for the recipient to immediately ask questions and offer feedback. Follow-up with further questions in an effort to make sure that all critical information is conveyed and there is a common understanding.

Communicate contextual information – Make an effort to regularly share personal information and increase opportunities to expand familiarity and friendship.

Convey respect or friendliness – Use greetings such as "Dear John" or "Hi Sue" to avoid the curtness often perceived when one leads with just the person's name. **Choose closers such as "Regards," "Cordially," "Cheers," or "Best" to indicate a professional or familiar relationship.** Incorporate exclamation marks (!) to "lighten" the mood of the message and express excitement and enthusiasm.

Use sensory predicates – Sensory predicates are word choices that reflect the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses that individuals prefer in written communication. In the future, software programs that detect sensory predicates in messages, and adjust the style of a sender's message accordingly, may be commonplace *(Crook and Booth, 1997)*. In the meantime, sensitivity to the communication style of the recipient may enable you to better establish rapport.

Conclusion

There are certainly numerous positive attributes of e-mail, and it will no doubt remain a central technological medium for communication in the foreseeable future. Indeed, e-mail is of great use in sparking conversations, efficiently conveying task-oriented information, and enhancing flexibility and speed in communication. However, some forms of communication—such as resolving disputes, establishing relationships, and negotiating agreements—call for greater social interaction or social presence than can be accomplished through e-mail.

While we can modify and strategically use e-mail as a medium of communication, it possesses distinct limitations that are not easily overcome and it cannot surpass the relational outcomes achieved by face-to-face communication. E-mail has limited social presence, and e-mail communications are typically less rich and more conflict prone than in-person communication. Moreover, e-mail exchanges are vulnerable to asymmetries in information transfer. As such, e-mail can undermine the cohesiveness of a group or institution, contribute to a lack of trust in the behavior and intentions of others, and make it more difficult to deliberate contentious issues and achieve common understanding. Conversely, individuals that rely on more integrative communications tend to more easily develop strong working relationships and generate a shared identity that facilitates efforts to work toward a common goal *(Hinds and Bailey, 2003)*. Clearly, communication skills are critical to effectiveness in advancing the goals of higher education. A strategic and purposeful use of e-mail, tempered with knowledge of its inherent limitations, is an important proficiency to bring to bear in the complex role of the organizational leader.

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IT'S ABOUT respect AT CONFEDERATION COLLEGE

Confederation College is one of 23 community colleges in Ontario, Canada, and is located at the very top of Lake Superior, centered in Thunder Bay. With a full-time enrolment of 3,000 students spread amongst a main campus and six regional ones, Confederation College serves the needs of a northern region the size of France. Eight-road hours separate Thunder Bay from the next major urban centre. Roughly 85% of the student body is drawn from the region called Northwestern Ontario, including the city of Thunder Bay (population 110, 000), small, surrounding resource-based communities, and a large number of Aboriginal reserves. About 20% of the students at Confederation are Aboriginal.

Incidents of inappropriate, disrespectful behaviour (swearing, racist talk, sexual jokes, bullying) were being informally reported to the counselling department, to professors, and to the student unions. Students were also giving the message that they didn't want to challenge the behaviour for fear of reprisal or being targeted themselves.

Anecdotal reports from professors and managers indicated that inappropriate behaviour was on the increase and that it appeared to be "normalized"—students just tolerated it and didn't expect that it could change.

Confederation College President Patricia Lang, in her address to the Ontario College Counsellors/College Committee on Disability Issues Conference at Humber College in Toronto in May 2006, listed racism as one of the challenges faced by staff and students at Confederation College.

Similar to the sentiments expressed by students, the staff were concerned that they wouldn't be "backed up" or supported if they took issue with a student's behaviour. Many said that it was easier not to deal with it.

In June 2006, a meeting of interested faculty, students, administration, and support staff was convened to share experiences and get a sense of how widespread these issues were being experienced. The consensus was that inappropriate behaviour was worse than originally thought.

THOMAS RUSSELL, JIM LEES, AND ALICIA SCOTT

These discussions revealed a widely held view that Confederation College needed to do more as a community to address how people treat each other. The Respect Campaign was born out of a desire to do something in the short term, to essentially put the issue of respectful behaviour on the radar.

Jim Lees, Coordinator of the Counselling Department after consulting, with members of the Student Success Centre headed by Kathy Kimpton, Director of Student Success and Registrar, brought some ideas to Alicia Scott and Thomas Russell who at the time were working as summer students at the campus residence. Doris Quistberg, Manager of the residence, and a long-time advocate of the need to "build community" at the 229-person residence, was excited about this campus-wide project and volunteered the services of the students who were both very skilled in art, multi-media design, and marketing.

The original suggestion was simply to build a campaign on the word "RESPECT." (Actually, Jim originally asked for a button design, a poster, and a pamphlet!) The two students workshopped colour choices and font selections to create a symbol that incorporated the concept of respect with the College identity.

Four days later, the students had created a collection of more than a dozen posters, as well as a button, a name-tag hanger, and a lanyard design. All were prototyped and ready to go. After some fine-tuning and informal feedback sessions with various stakeholders around the college, the Respect Campaign was pitched to the senior management team and was enthusiastically endorsed. A modest budget was struck. The campaign was to be rolled out within six weeks!

The campaign was presented in concept on August 28, 2006 to the Confederation College faculty at the Faculty Welcome Back Session

"It is such a privilege for me to work in a college environment where students, faculty and staff care so passionately about building a culture of heightened respect, open dialogue and trust. Our students have an active voice at all levels of decision making at Confederation and our faculty and staff genuinely welcome their valuable ideas and perspectives. The "Respect Campaign," which has been overwhelmingly embraced throughout the college, is a courageous initiative that was created by our students and successfully implemented through meaningful collaboration with our faculty and staff. The "Respect Campaign" is a significant gift from our students to the Confederation College community, for which, we are truly grateful."

Patricia Lang, *President, Confederation College*
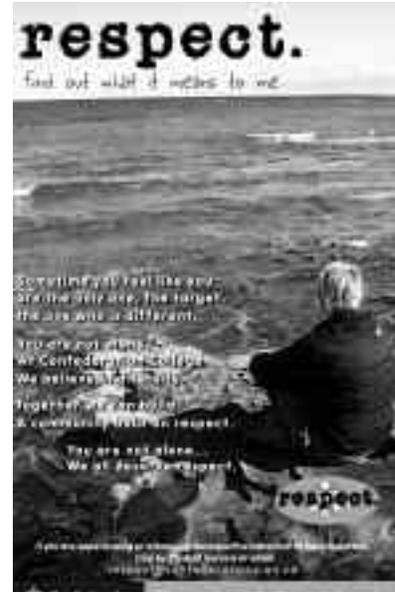
"Confederation College's Respect Campaign began with the students and their expectations about the kind of environment in which they wanted to learn. They were also thinking about the kind of world in which they wanted to live, a world in which diverse people could live and learn together harmoniously. These students have taught me a great deal about the freedoms students demand and the responsibilities they are prepared to assume. They are actively constructing and modeling the very world in which I want to live."

Dr. Kim Fedderson,
Vice President, Academic and Student Services

planned by Jeanine Nagy, Manager Staff Development and Kim Fedderson, Vice President, Academic and Student Services. All faculty were provided with a button, a tag hanger, and a Learning Guide. The Learning Guide explained key components of the Respect Campaign:

"The Respect Campaign is meant to raise public awareness, to

The Respect Campaign is a response, a first step.

"The Respect Campaign is meant to raise public awareness, to make civility a topic of discussion,
to help raise the bar in terms of our expectations when it comes to behaviour and to prepare students for the expectations in the work world.

"The Respect Campaign signals a need for us to challenge some of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that fail to recognize human dignity and to model and

teach appropriate ways to interact in society.

"The Respect Campaign sees respect as a human right. Fostering this belief is a critical part of our mandate as a post-secondary institution.

"The Respect Campaign emphasizes that the College needs to be accessible to a broad spectrum of students. When we talk about the acceptance of diversity, we are talking race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, intellectual capacity, body shape, disability, age, family background, parental status and socio-economic background. If we want to call ourselves an access college, we need to do all that we can to make the College experience a positive and productive one for all students."

The Learning Guide asked faculty to do three things: wear a button if they were comfortable doing so; discuss student rights and responsibilities; and foster discussion about respect during the full-day orientation and during the school year.

The following ideas were suggested:

Talk to students about respect and what that looks like in your program. Some ideas…

- Have a classroom discussion about appropriate language to be used in the College.
- Talk about and demonstrate how to have a respectful difference of opinion within classroom discussions.
- Talk about the differences between politically-correct

> "If someone had told me that two students could take a concept like "respect", and in a short 20 minutes, create a richer and deeper appreciation that was both honest and real, I would have had my doubts. Not only did these student presenters make the concept personal and meaningful, they did it in a way that touched and moved both my students and myself. This presentation exemplified the highest standards of excellence, and in a very real sense, inspired and enriched the learning journey of each."
>
> Sheila Arges, *Professor*

and respectful dialogue… sometimes they are the same, sometimes not. We want to promote authentic discussion in an environment that fosters the honest and respectful exchange of ideas. These ideas can be uniform, controversial, even ugly, but it doesn't mean we don't discuss them. Respect is not about just being nice, it goes far beyond that.

- Provide guidelines about how to do group work in a respectful way that encourages participation and results in inclusiveness.
- Explain what diversity is and why we value it in our learning community; diversity in a classroom can greatly enhance learning.
- Tie behaviour expected in the classroom to behaviour expected in the workplace.
- Tie behaviour expected in the classroom to behaviour expected in society…our most successful graduates have always been the best communicators and those who demonstrate an attitude of respect forthemselves and others.

All students received a Respect explanation card/bookmark inserted in their Daytimer Student Handbooks.

During the first semester (from September to December 2006), over 2,000 buttons will be circulated throughout the college by Confederation's two student governments, the Student Success Centre, and by interested faculty. One thousand lanyards emblazoned with the Respect Campaign logo will also be distributed this semester.

A series of fourteen Respect posters will be strategically placed in all College buildings and regional campuses during the school year. The posters will depict current or former students and staff, not models, and will be representative of a broad spectrum of constituent groups with whom the College's students will be able to identify. It is hoped that the posters will help set the tone for appropriate behaviour and help give permission for people to speak up when disrespect is shown. Posters specific to departments and programs will be developed upon request.

Throughout this year, an advisory group will monitor the progress of the campaign as it evolves. Among other challenges, the group will be developing measures to determine the nature of the impact of the Respect Campaign on the Confederation College community.

Thomas Russell *is an alumni of the Recreation and Leisure Services program at Confederation College. Thomas has worked as Residence Program Coordinator and has served on the Student Union Board.*
Alicia Scott *is a student in the Law and Security Administration program at Confederation College. Alicia is from Woodstock, New Brunswick and is the Resident Advisor Team Leader at Sibley Hall.*
Jim Lees *is a Counsellor in the Student Success Centre and is presently in his 20th year at Confederation. Jim taught for 15 years in the Human Services Department before assuming his present role.*

Maximizing *the* Potential *of our* Adjunct Faculty

Richard Lyons

In steadily increasing numbers, they meander through our corridors, seemingly searching for a room number

Their faces are recognized by precious few, perhaps only the department chairperson or dean who hired them. Like the new student who in mid-year took a seat next to us in our high school history class, we usually fail to welcome them in the way we would hope others would welcome us.

They are our part-time faculty members. Most colleges and universities could not function efficiently without the active role that they play in our instructional programs. Adjunct faculty provide expertise in critical courses that perhaps no full-time member on staff possesses; their evening and weekend availability enable us to expand class schedules to serve our evermore time- and place-challenged students; their passion for sharing their expertise enables our students to achieve "real world" perspectives; and they do it all for embarrassingly modest remuneration and with shameful lack of support (Lyons, 1999).

Approximately 600,000 part-time instructors are now employed regularly in North American colleges and universities (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006; Mullins, 2001), staffing an ever-increasing share of course sections. As publicly-supported colleges and universities respond to reduced government financial support, and Baby Boomers move toward retirement age, the number of part-time faculty members is likely to expand even further.

While relying upon part-timers, (who deliver half of the course sections at an increasing number of institutions), department chairs and other instructional leaders often undervalue their contributions. One might ask why a cohort who delivers such an integral component of total course offerings is so much less likely than full-time faculty members to receive the professional development that is required for success? Is it an "out of sight, out of mind" paradigm that keeps their development a low priority? Or does the history of treating them as less than colleagues, and their lack of power, simply allow us to get away with it? Should not more of us build a case for their valuable role, citing studies that demonstrate that the quality of their teaching shows no significant difference from that of full-timers (Gappa and Leslie, 2002)? It is past time for our institutions to address this issue head on. But where do we start? The logical place would seem to be by seeking to understand our adjunct instructors more deeply (Covey, 1989).

CRITICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Until 1993, there was little research available on issues related to part-time faculty. That changed with the publication of the extensive research of Judith Gappa and David Leslie, in their book *The Invisible Faculty*. Among their findings were four profiles of part-time instructors, predicated upon lifestyles and motivation to teach.

A *specialist, expert,* or *professional* denotes a part-timer who is employed full-time outside of teaching, and is driven to teach by a desire to share their expertise, network with community members, and/or repay a psychological debt. This profile

includes those from business, the medical professions, and the public sector who teach in career-oriented programs, and is believed to be the largest cohort of adjunct faculty nationwide, approaching half of all who teach part-time.

Freelancers are those who, by choice, are employed in multiple part-time jobs, including a regular teaching assignment. They thrive on the variety and the unique psychic rewards of teaching and also rely on the income that it generates. A classic freelancer would be a musician who plays in the local symphony, gives private lessons, plays special functions, and teaches part-time. Freelancers are commonly thought to be the least numerous profile.

Career enders are approaching the end of their work lives, but want to maintain a connection to the energy of a serious endeavor. Staying connected typically requires continuous updating and maintaining relationships from their previous environments. While they have historically been a small and quiet group, their ranks are expected to swell with retiring Baby Boomers.

Having recently completed, or about to fulfill, the requirements of their graduate programs, *Aspiring Academics* teach largely for the income it generates and to build their potential for pursuing a full-time teaching position. Although they represent an estimated 20 to 25% of part-time instructors across all disciplines and institutions, their ratios are likely higher within areas that are home to large universities, and within

certain disciplines—especially the humanities. Aspiring academics receive the most press attention, which fosters a perception of their being the largest profile of adjunct professors. Needing to repay student loans and defray living expenses, aspiring academics often teach concurrently for multiple institutions, earning the moniker of "roads scholars" or "freeway flyers" (Gappa and Leslie, 1993).

> Teaching often at non-traditional times and places, adjunct instructors are likely to feel an estrangement from the institution and a sense of isolation from other faculty members.

According to Pam Schuetz, "part-timers are more weakly linked to their students, colleagues, and institutions than full-timers (2002, p. 44)." She points out that adjunct faculty members are almost twice as likely to have no contact with colleagues as full-timers, and that they generally have less awareness of students' needs or campus support services (pp. 42-43). Schuetz suggests that good teachers are more likely to have strong connections to colleagues and the institution and that increasing those connections will ultimately improve teaching.

Many part-timers have other obligations that prevent them from participating fully in the life of the faculty. Colleges and universities unfortunately paint the entire group with the same brush and

fail to include any part-timers in their professional development activities. Interestingly however, Leslie and Gappa (2002) report that part-timers are a much more stable portion of the workforce than many administrators assume, with 30% reporting over ten years of teaching experience at their current institution.

Roueche, Roueche, and Milliron (1995) write that adjunct instructors: Should be integrated into the college community and recognized as increasingly important players in the teaching and learning process in the interest of providing quality instruction to the growing number of full and part-time students who will sit in their classrooms, in the interest of appreciating the investment value of the part-time faculty, and ultimately in the interest of establishing and maintaining the college's reputation for teaching excellence (p. 120).

The sheer number of class sections assigned to adjunct professors makes a powerful argument that well-managed colleges and universities should invest in their teaching lives. Even as the financial survival of the institution relies increasingly on the adjunct faculty, so too does the academic quality of the teaching and learning enterprise. If good teaching that produces evidence of student learning is to be anything other than random, then institutional policies must deliberately support the development of all instructors. Many institutions adhere to this path by providing resources and training for

their full-time faculty, but if these programs ignore the adjunct instructors then a large gap in educational quality is likely to appear (Grubb, 1999).

Best Practices for Supporting Adjunct Faculty

A growing number of colleges and universities are realizing the value in preparing and supporting their part-time instructors more effectively, through initiatives grounded in their needs. One study (Lyons, 1996) found that part-time instructors require:

1. A thorough orientation to the institution, its culture and practices;
2. Adequate training in fundamental teaching and classroom management skills;
3. A sense of belonging to the institution;
4. Both initial and ongoing professional development;
5. Recognition for quality work that is perceived as appropriate and adequate.

> With the quality of higher education under increased criticism from key circles (Jaschick, 2006) and rising pressure from regional accrediting associations, it is essential that instructional leaders include part-time faculty in their strategies for improving institutional effectiveness.

But part-timers' potential extends beyond their teaching alone. Since the largest ratio of adjunct faculty members are specialist, expert, or professional, many provide connections to community employers, who might provide internships and jobs for students, support of specialized programs, and service on various boards and committees. Adjunct instructors of the career ender tend to be opinion leaders with long-term ties to citizens with the resources needed to support fund-raising activities.

Besides facilitating the flow of resources toward your institution, a well-developed cohort of adjunct faculty has potential for communicating your message to opinion leaders within your community. When a new instruction program or fund-raising initiative has been implemented, what better group of "mavens" and "connectors" could be engaged to reach a "tipping point" of support than your adjunct faculty members (Gladwell, 2002)? They often have established relationships with civic, spiritual, and business organizations that have potential to move such initiatives toward successful outcomes much more quickly than would have otherwise been possible.

One of the beauties—and sometimes challenges—of the North American system of higher education system is that institutions are so diverse in mission, culture, student population, and other critical factors. Noting that there is no "one size fits all" solution to increasing the effectiveness of your institution's adjunct faculty, we will

highlight perhaps the most comprehensive of programs featured in the upcoming Best Practices for Supporting Adjunct Faculty(Lyons) from Anker Publishing Company.

In 1996, Florida's Indian River Community College (IRCC) was ahead of most institutions in the degree of support that it was providing its part-time faculty members. A handbook had been developed and distributed and an annual required meeting had been conducted for several years. An adjunct faculty committee had been appointed, conducted a survey of adjunct faculty, and had initiated communications improvements.

That fall, an initiative for adjunct faculty within one of the college's larger instructional divisions was implemented. Its components included:

1. A systematic orientation regimen designed to ensure understanding of basic policies and procedures;
2. A course entitled "Instructor Effectiveness Training" was developed that was subsequently required for completion by all new adjunct instructors, prior to, or concurrent with, their initial teaching assignment;
3. A mentoring program between new adjunct instructors and veteran full- or part-time instructors, designed to fill in the gaps of the course's curriculum and make applications to the instructor's specific course;
4. A series of meal meetings to remedy the widespread isolation perceived by adjuncts reported in the national studies, at which new and veteran, full- and part-time faculty members could socialize, foster bonds, and participate in a professional development opportunity; and
5. A materials resource center that contained books and papers on key topics of interest to both full- and part-time instructors.

Adjunct instructors often report that the offer to teach their first course sounded something like: "The class starts next Monday night. Here is textbook and a previous syllabus. Call me if you need help." While darkly humorous, such orientations to part-time teaching are unfortunately all too common—setting the new adjunct instructor up for failure to achieve the level of success that we expect in the increasingly accountable environment of higher education (Lyons, Kysilka and Pawlas, 1999). In planning a more effective and manageable orientation regimen, committee members and instructional leaders developed a protocol for addressing the range of issues affecting part-time teaching. It included two elements—a group orientation that was piggybacked on the existing annual meeting, and a face-to-face orientation delivered in a one-on-one or small group setting by the department chair that employed a checklist that had been designed by the committee.

From its inception, the cornerstone of the IRCC adjunct faculty program has been the "Instructor Effectiveness

Training" course. Beginning a week or two before each fall and spring semester (depending upon the academic calendar), its four sessions focus on course planning, managing the course effectively, strategies for delivering more effective instruction, and evaluating student achievement and teaching effectiveness. Besides the achievement of those objectives, the 500 adjunct faculty members (and 50 full-timers) who have since completed the course have also fostered collegial relationships and identified valuable teaching resources that would have not otherwise been discovered. As deans and department chairs received feedback on its effectiveness, the program was expanded to include all of IRCC's newly-hired part-time instructors, as a condition of their employment.

In 2002, the course was adapted into three online versions for delivery to an increasingly time- and place-challenged adjunct faculty. A 2003 survey indicated that 74% of the respondents who had completed the course indicated that it had prepared them well to be a successful instructor. In a 2006 study, the course was proven to have improved student retention in the participants' course sections, as well as the retention of the instructors themselves.

To provide those who had completed the course with support in applying its content, and to reduce the sense of isolation that adjunct instructors commonly experienced, a mentoring component was designed that would provide maximum flexibility. Unlike some other mentoring programs in which new instructors are assigned mentors, the IRCC approach provided mentors and their mentees with opportunities for making their own partner matches after participating in brown bag lunches and other activities.

> One veteran full-time instructor got so caught up in the mentoring enthusiasm that he took it upon himself to mentor an entire cohort of instructors who delivered the same critical course—meeting with them each Friday for lunch, and remaining until all issues related to delivery of that coursewere resolved.

The 2003 survey found that 67% of respondents had been mentored by at least one person at IRCC, and of these, 82% found the experience effective.

Two regular social components have had lasting impact on the success of the entire adjunct faculty support effort. The first has been a series of brown bag luncheons, whose agendas are evenly divided between sharing a meal and a professional development activity. The second social event has been an annual Spring Reception that celebrates the contributions of the college's adjunct faculty members. Co-sponsored by the IRCC chapter of the Florida Association of Community Colleges, each reception has featured a welcome from the IRCC President that communicates strongly the importance of the adjunct faculty in achieving the college's mission. The reception has grown in attendance and ambiance each year and was provided additional prestige in 2003, when it integrated the recognition of the first group of "Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Members." Award winners are encouraged to bring their spouses and children, which fosters an even more special environment—filled with photo opportunities that live on in the culture of the institution.

The final component of the adjunct faculty professional development initiative was the creation of a professional development information resource that could be accessed by individuals as needed. Housed initially as "hard copy" resources only in the college library, a rich set of resources was posted on the college Web site in 2001 and has since been expanded. The 2003 survey indicated that a better effort needs to be made to promote awareness of the library resource, as only 28% of respondents had used it, but the Web page was accessed by 60% of respondents, with 76% having found it to be useful.

Over a decade following its inception, the initiative has become a part of the fabric of the institution, with survey results documenting its value to any who might have doubts. Increasing opportunities for full- and part-time to talk on a collegial level have expanded, and the bifurcation between full- and part-time faculty members that was cited so widely in The Invisible Faculty (Gappa and Leslie, 1993) and had previously existed at IRCC, had eroded nearly totally. The disparaging remarks about "adjuncts" that had once been embarrassingly common have become increasingly rare.

> Adjunct instructors are more widely seen on campus, frequently stopping by their instructional departments to update themselves on critical issues and discuss teaching and classroom management strategies with full-timers.

The end-of-the-year reception has become an event that full-time faculty members and administrators look forward to attending and in which they have become more openly and genuinely engaged with their part-time colleagues. In the 2003 survey of IRCC's adjunct faculty members, nearly 70% reported feeling "like a true member of the IRCC faculty."

Conclusion

The IRCC program and other initiatives to better prepare and support adjunct faculty share common characteristics. Early in its planning, each initiative identified a mission and measurable outcomes. Each made a concerted effort to generate support from the top administration, from its department chairs and the faculty as a whole. All were launched with modest budgets. Each generated feedback from its participants and fed analysis back into improving their programs on a continuous basis.

Finally, and arguably most importantly, each initiative had one or more "champions"—someone willing to advocate for their part-time colleagues, often in the face of some who viewed supporting adjunct faculty as inappropriate. These champions view adjunct faculty as providing valuable perspectives to students, knowledge of current trends within critical career fields, and as a connection to employers within the community. These champions tend to be realists—knowing that the trends that encourage the use of part-time faculty are not going to subside in the foreseeable future—and have committed to working within the existing system until a perceived ideal world in which all professors are well-paid and full-time arrives.

During the tight budget times expected to extend well into the future, our institutions will no doubt employ as many or more part-time instructors to staff their courses than before. In an age when legislators, students, their employers, parents, and financial aid providers are expecting increased instructional quality and accountability, all institutions owe it to their students and other stakeholders to provide sufficient, integrated professional development opportunities to their increasingly critical part-timers (Lyons, 2004).

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Richard Lyons has served as an adjunct instructor, professor of management, department chair, instructional dean, and coordinator of faculty development. As the Senior Consultant with Faculty Development Associates, Dr. Lyons has presented face-to-face workshops to adjunct instructors and their instructional leaders throughout North America, and consulted with leading institutions to design programs for supporting their part-time faculty members. He has been published widely, including *The Adjunct Professor's Guide to Success and Success Strategies for Adjunct Faculty* for Allyn and Bacon, as well as *Best Practices for Supporting Adjunct Faculty* that he edited (in press) for Anker Publishing Company. With Helen Burnstad and Molly Baker, he has launched http://www.AdjunctSuccess.net for institutions that want to prepare and support their part-timer instructors more effectively.

DARYL PETERSON

SUPPORTING ADJUNCT FACULTY ONLINE

IF GOOD TEACHING THAT PRODUCES STUDENT LEARNING IS TO BE ACHIEVED WITH CONSISTENCY, INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES MUST DELIBERATELY SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS.

Many colleges follow this path by providing resources and training for full-time faculty, but if these programs ignore the adjuncts, then a large gap in educational quality is likely to appear (Grubb, 1999).

Once academic leaders realize that a professional development initiative in their part-time faculty members is a wise investment, they must then factor their availability to participate in the design and implementation strategy of the institution's program. Two categories of part-timers—"experts or professionals" and "freelancers"—are by definition employed extensively outside their teaching assignments. "Aspiring academics" sometimes teach at more than one institution concurrently, and even "career enders" lead busy lives (Gappa and Leslie, 1993). An effective program that serves a significant portion of its intended audience would do well to consider the potential of providing professional development offerings in a way that maximizes convenience.

The statistics regarding the steady increase in instruction by adjuncts nationally are well known. Estimates indicate that up to 60% of college instruction is now adjunct-led (Wallin, 2005). Valencia Community College is not exempt from these statistics, especially in first-year courses such as developmental math, reading, and writing. While college-wide, 43% of Valencia course sections are taught by adjunct faculty (Valencia IPR, Fall, 2004 Summary), the ratios in developmental sections shift considerably. For example, on one of the largest campuses 87% of college prep mathematics and 56% of college prep reading and writing was taught by adjunct faculty (Valencia IR, July 22, 2004, Learning Indicators Report). With approximately three-quarters of its incoming class (first-time college students) testing into developmental education courses, creating stability and

consistency at this level of instruction becomes extremely important. This high dependence on adjunct instructors as the first exposure of many students to college makes formal training for adjunct instructors an educational imperative.

Adjunct Professional Development History

Valencia's history of faculty development for adjuncts was basically ad hoc, featuring in-service face-to-face events that adjunct faculty found difficult, if not impossible, to attend. Seminars were many times offered on days presenters were available. Topics were often selected for other than strategic reasons. Attendance was limited, sometimes peaking at 20-30 adjuncts, approximately 2-3% of the adjunct staff, which generally represented the "choir." It became obvious that if Valencia was going to not only maintain, but in some areas increase, adjunct ratios they must make a meaningful investment in their development and create ways to engage a much larger percentage of them in the college learning community.

Associate Faculty Program Background

In developing its partnership with adjunct instructors, Valencia embarked on an ambitious plan to create an inclusive, comprehensive adjunct-faculty development program in 2003. The "blended learning" program was developed via an "innovation management process" in which Valencia initiated a plan to "round up the innovations" (O'Banion, 1997) and bring them to scale.

In Phase 1 of the process, an innovative practice (in this case adjunct faculty development) was pilot-tested and assessed for effectiveness. These initiatives (ScenariosOnline courses and face-to-face seminars) were grant funded. Successful Phase 1 initiatives that showed the potential to bring systemic change were then funded by a combination of external grants and internal "mini-grants." Phase 2 initiatives (adjunct outreach and development) had to show increasing levels of effectiveness in order to be moved forward. Finally, in Phase 3, the Associate Faculty Program was brought to scale. Funded by "hard money" from the operational budget and institutionalized at the beginning of the 2005-2006 academic year, the program provided a step in pay and a new title for adjunct faculty in exchange for a significant commitment to professional development.

Several years ago, Valencia developed an extremely successful, comprehensive three-year Teaching and Learning Academy for new full-time faculty, however, cultivating a mind-set that valued the same commitment of support for adjunct instruction was no easy matter. But after three years of pilot testing and the collaboration of many areas of the college, including Finance, Human Resources, and Academic Affairs, the ultimate consensus was that all faculty need time, resources, and support to:

- Help make good on the promises of the "open door"
- Learn about diversity and how to build inclusive-learning communities
- Understand learning styles to support development of diverse teaching strategies
- Design learning activities that motivate and engage students
- Develop assessments that reflect more than information recall

THE NEW ASSOCIATE FACULTY PROGRAM WAS A BLENDED-LEARNING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM THAT FOCUSED ON CREATING COMMUNITY AND CONNECTING ADJUNCT FACULTY TO THE COLLEGE BY COMBINING AN ONLINE (SCENARIOSONLINE) FACULTY CURRICULUM WITH FACE-TO-FACE (FACULTY TO FACULTY) SEMINARS.

Compensation Model

The current adjunct pay scale has become Step One, with no faculty development necessary.

Step Two provides the title of Associate Faculty and a pay increase of $33.00 per credit hour (a three-credit course yields a $99.00 increase), after 60 hours of faculty development have been accumulated. Hours are earned by completing combinations of the following:

- Faculty To Faculty (three seminars) 20 hours
- ScenariosOnline courses:
    Teaching in the Learning College (required) 30 hours
    Succeeding With Online Group Work 20 hours
    Doing the Write Thing (Developmental Writing) 20 hours
    Making It All Add Up (Developmental Math) 20 hours
    New courses such as *Assessment* will be added in 2007
- Other approved faculty development and technology workshops hours variable
- Facilitation of approved faculty development hours variable

Associate Faculty status has a three-year time limit. Renewal of status depends on accomplishing 60 additional hours during the following three years (for example, 20 hours per year would keep status current for an additional three years).

Faculty To Faculty

Faculty To Faculty is a successful series of topical seminars offered to Valencia's adjunct faculty during the January semester. Two hundred thirty-two participants attended the 2005 seminars. The series is facilitated by full-time faculty members and topics are determined by surveys of Valencia adjunct faculty. Events include a showcase of faculty work in the topics presented.

One of many positive outcomes of the Faculty To Faculty seminars has been the development of a Digital Dossier, an electronic teaching portfolio that allows adjunct faculty members to put their best professional work forward where the entire academic community can view it. The Digital Dossier is a collection of materials that provide a perspective of a faculty member at Valencia and includes:

- *Goals,* a list of the individual's goals in professional development.
- *Professional Development Record,* what has been accomplished in faculty development.
- *Teaching Artifacts,* a compilation of teaching artifacts created to use in the faculty member's courses.
- *Teaching Philosophy,* the individual's personal views on teaching.
- *Reflections,* where individuals post their thinking about professional development activities and the effect they have had on faculty work in and out of the classroom.

Examples of Valencia faculty Digital Dossiers can be found here: http://net2.valenciacc.edu/cp/adjunct_faculty_public/list.cfm

The Digital Dossier also offers Valencia's faculty development office a key opportunity for assessment of the Associate Faculty program. Beginning fall 2006, and each term thereafter, Digital Dossiers online will be scored with a holistic rubric. Scores will not be made public, but exemplary Dossiers will be recognized and rewarded. Those faculty members with inadequate or incomplete portfolios will be contacted by the faculty development office and offered a variety of opportunities to improve their work on public display. The Digital Dossier is one of the program assessment methods that grant some insight on what the participants learned and how they are using their new skills.

ScenariosOnline

To establish a partnership with adjunct faculty, it is imperative that the curriculum offered to them not only respects them as professionals but also:

– is available, accessible, and convenient

– models good pedagogy

– is grounded in proven learning theory

– provides strategies for immediate classroom application

– is cost effective for the college

To achieve those goals, Valencia selected WisdomTools Scenarios™, an e-learning tool combining technology and story, as the vehicle for creating online faculty learning communities. The unique courses created with this tool are case-based narratives that provide authentic contexts for asynchronous, collaborative conversations and group insights among faculty. ScenariosOnline courses provide participants in Valencia's faculty development programs with a number of significant benefits:

Accessibility. Courses are asynchronous, convenient and rich with useful tools. They make connections among faculty who are generally very isolated and find it difficult, if not impossible, to attend face-to-face events.

Modeling. In addition to the convenience, ScenariosOnline courses model the collaboration the college wants for students, and the deep learning that story and problem-based learning foster. The courses also introduce faculty to the concept of an online-learning community.

Theory-based. The courses are designed for situations such as classroom instruction where procedures are "shades of gray" and context-based, with a set of options and no single solution. While faculty are generally "content experts" in their areas, many do not have a working understanding of how learning really "happens." ScenariosOnline courses include a rich variety of resources that provide a foundation for development of strategies for creating positive classroom learning environments.

Applicability. Course topics focus on a variety of teaching methodologies and include course planning, syllabus development, classroom management, learning styles and dealing with diverse student populations, active learning, assessment, etc. Many course activities and assignments foster immediate application and facilitate "action learning" (Marquardt, 1999).

Participant Evaluations and Reactions

Valencia's evaluation of the Associate Faculty Program is a modification of their well researched and assessed approach to full-time faculty development (Nellis, Hosman, King, and Armstead, 2001). As with full-time faculty programs, recording participant reactions is essential for the documentation of "return on investment."

From the Mike Bosley dissertation survey research in the spring of 2004, Valencia learned that

- 93% of the 241 (10% of adjuncts) respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with adjunct teaching at Valencia
- 91% stated that they were likely to "encourage a good friend" to seek an adjunct position at Valencia
- 82% reported that Valencia's professional development activities met their professional needs
- 90% (36% of the sample) who participated in ScenariosOnline courses rated them as good or excellent

Faculty To Faculty feedback survey approval ratings have been consistently above 90% since the program was initiated. Participants clearly felt that the meetings met their expectations, contained ideas they could apply, and were effectively presented in engaging formats (Leadership Valencia Evaluations Statistics,

2003-2005). Some insight into participant learning was also gained through the assignments. For example, in the 2005 seminar series, participants demonstrated learning by creating and displaying a classroom-based assessment technique, a use of technology to enhance learning or a strategy for enhancing student critical thinking.

Although gauging how much participants in faculty development learn is not always easy, **ScenariosOnline** course effectiveness has been evaluated extensively over the past five years. Participants who finish the courses will have completed at least 80% of the activities. Those completing *Teaching in the Learning College* will have produced a new syllabus for at least one course containing three items that make it more learning-centered. They will also have used at least one Classroom Assessment Technique (CAT) in a course and related its effectiveness, plus incorporated at least one developmental advising (LifeMap) activity in a course and related its effectiveness.

ONE EVALUATION METHOD EMPLOYED IS TO DOWNLOAD THE ONLINE PARTICIPANT DIALOGUE AND ANALYZE IT FOR THE QUALITY OF EXCHANGE AND TO SEE IF ANY NEW LEARNING IS VISIBLE THERE.

This learning measure is conducted during the spring term offering of *Teaching in the Learning College.* Each year the findings indicate that adjunct faculty have a true "aha" experience with CATs and a greater understanding of the need for and methods of creating more active learning in their classrooms. Another pattern from past evaluation is that although there seems to be some gain in comprehension-level acquaintance with Valencia's LifeMap developmental advising system, adjunct faculty engagement has been slow to develop. However, results from the latest *Teaching in the Learning College* Alumni Survey (see below) indicate that some progress is being made.

In the course evaluations of the Valencia pilots and betas of *Teaching in the Learning College* in 2001 and 2002 (Nellis et al, 2002), participants liked the course, found the resources useful, felt more connected to the college and colleagues, and applied their new learning in revised syllabi and lesson plans.

One limited *Teaching in the Learning College* cohort study (Nellis, 2004) has indicated that adjunct faculty "graduates" are more successful with their students than they were prior to taking the course, resulting in an 8% average increase in students passing their courses with a grade of C or better.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, one hundred thirty-five (135) participants completed ScenariosOnline courses. Post-course surveys of participants in the spring and summer 2004 sessions (n=66) showed that:

– 97% agree that they can "define and demonstrate learning-centered approaches to instruction."
– 94% agree that "this online seminar was helpful in improving my classroom performance."
– 95% agree that they can "truthfully tell other colleagues that I enjoyed being part of this online seminar."

Another evaluation method is the use of *Teaching in the Learning College* "alumni surveys" every two years in an effort to see how much learning has been retained and incorporated into

classroom instruction. The results from respondents to the most recent (May 2006) survey indicate:

– 100% have made changes to make their syllabus more learning centered
– 100% have incorporated active or collaborative learning strategies in their courses
– 91% are using CATs in their courses
– 100% are engaging students in discussions around subjects relating to life development activities (educational, vocational, social, etc.)
– 77% have begun to incorporate technology (student email, web assignments, group discussion boards, etc.) in their courses

Valencia has collected a great deal of information on these courses. They believe that the assessment of these courses makes a strong case for their effectiveness with adjunct faculty. They do not feel that the test of their merit lies solely with statistical significance. In any case, setting up a controlled study in this environment is not feasible at this point. This type of program has to be evaluated differently than the manner in which one would evaluate the effect of a drug in clinical trials before it goes to market.

The Next Steps

Although Valencia is getting very promising results with their adjunct faculty, they feel that there is still a long way to go.

Central to Valencia's work over the next three years is a process designed to expand engagement of adjunct faculty in best practices for creating highly engaged learning environments and to complete efforts to assess learning throughout the college.

The first step in expanding adjunct engagement will involve further development of the online faculty development curriculum. The second will be in the face-to-face realm where discipline-based development programs will be expanded. The third step will be to more closely align online and face-to-face components of the program. In addition, the assessment process will become more closely related to adjunct engagement.

By the end of fall 2006, Valencia expects to have 175 adjuncts certified as Associate Faculty. The goal is to have 500 Associate Faculty as partners in learning in the 2008-2009 academic year.

As Valencia moves forward, there is considerable enthusiasm about the new work with adjunct faculty. It is gratifying to see faculty development that was begun with small innovations and grant funding become a part of the college's operational budget. With the addition of the online components, they are now reaching the instructors of a large numbers of course sections and having a positive impact on the student learning experience. As the college grows even more dependent on the services of adjunct faculty, it is imperative to continue and expand efforts to draw them into the community of practice and the culture of teaching for learning. The Associate Faculty are valued through the step in pay and the change of status, they are connected to the academic community through the support of the faculty development programs, and their good work is becoming more visible through the Digital Dossier teaching portfolios, among other things. The progress so far has been breathtaking and now Valencia is bringing the innovations to scale.

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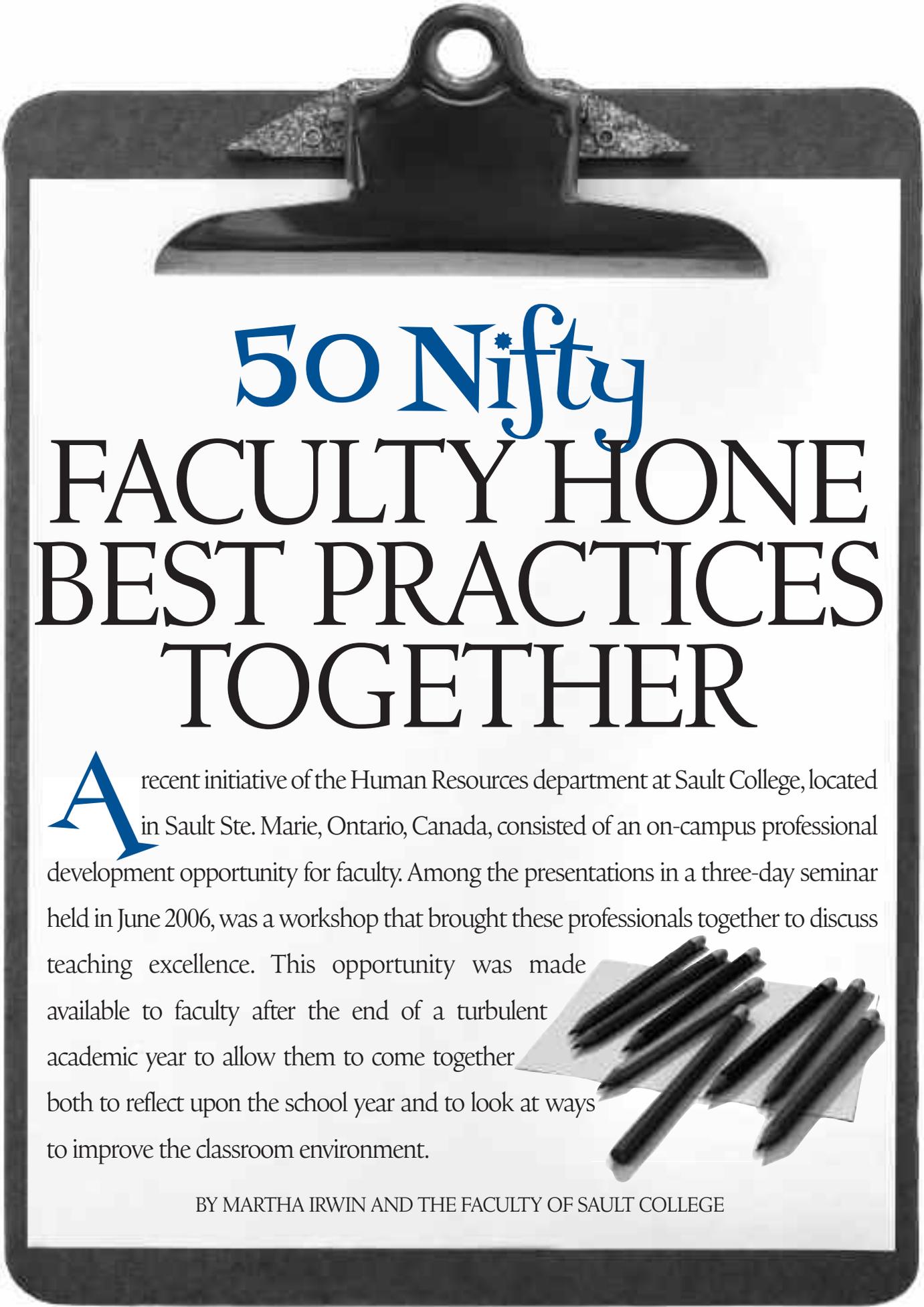
50 Nifty
FACULTY HONE BEST PRACTICES TOGETHER

A recent initiative of the Human Resources department at Sault College, located in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada, consisted of an on-campus professional development opportunity for faculty. Among the presentations in a three-day seminar held in June 2006, was a workshop that brought these professionals together to discuss teaching excellence. This opportunity was made available to faculty after the end of a turbulent academic year to allow them to come together both to reflect upon the school year and to look at ways to improve the classroom environment.

BY MARTHA IRWIN AND THE FACULTY OF SAULT COLLEGE
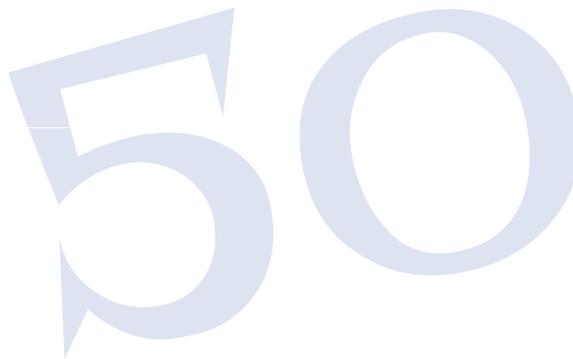
One tangible product that resulted from the workshop was a comprehensive list of "50 Nifty" ideas to use in the classroom to improve classroom participation. Faculty were asked to reflect on the topics and asked to share their best practices ideas with the group. The task of producing the 50 Nifty list proved very worthwhile.

The 50 Nifty helped me to consolidate and prioritize my favourite ideas.

Professor Joanna MacDougall, Sault College Coordinator of the OTA/PTA program, says, "Many great ideas were presented by the participants, however, it was difficult to process all of this at once. The 50 Nifty helped me to consolidate and prioritize my favourite ideas. The end product was a neat list that I could refer to several months later which triggers all sorts of other ideas and conversations that happened at the conference. It also provided a nice tool to share with instructors in the OTA/PTA program who did not attend the conference. It's so difficult to sum up all of the information presented in this conference and provide those who did not attend with something to take away and use as well. The 50 Nifty answered this challenge."

"In addition to supporting teachers who did not attend the conference, the 50 Nifty has helped idea sharing and generating within our school," echoes Andrea Sicoly, Sault College professor in Health Sciences, also in attendance at the event.

Sault College offers seventy diploma and degree programs to approximately 2000 full-time students. The average age of students is 23-years old, giving each classroom a dynamic that mixes adult and direct high school entry students together. With 130 full-time faculty on campus, and an additional 150

part-time faculty, meeting other faculty outside your own department isn't always easy. Faculty members welcomed the conference. "Opportunities that bring faculty together across disciplines allow us to reflect and empathize with each other," says Sicoly. "I found the workshop and the 50 Nifty list to be very effective and I find myself referring to these strategies continuously."

Sault College faculty discuss their favourite teaching strategies. The post-it notes on the side wall show the beginning of the brainstorming process leading to "50 Nifty Faculty Favourites.

"We have tried to adopt several of these 50 Nifty ideas this semester and already, this early in the term, have students saying things like "this is really cool": "you're class goes by so fast"; "you have a really different teaching style – but I really like it!"

Probably most useful. explains MacDougall and Sicoly. is the feedback they are receiving from the students.

The College's Director of Human Resources, Rick Webb, reported that the feedback received from all of the attendees was very positive. He stressed that bringing people together to share best practices is vital to improving everyone's success, and that ultimately this action will benefit our students.

"We see this as an exciting opportunity going forward. Sharing and building off of each other's talents makes our combined efforts far greater than if we did this on an individual basis," explains Webb. Faculty have continued sharing ideas and have had follow-up discussions on using the 50 Nifty faculty tips within their classrooms.

When asked to share the best practices 50 Nifty list in the Leadership Journal, faculty and human resources staff welcomed the opportunity. As we learned from the process, so might others, and they might use this document as a starting point for more faculty discussion and professional development.

One particular nifty idea using a collaborative approach to teaching has one professor saying. "I also find most of the collaborative approaches I have tried result in a lot less work for me because the students are often teaching themselves-so the "teaching" is less exhausting and much more enjoyable for myself as well as for the students." Now that's Nifty!

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50 Nifty Faculty Favorites

"I don't care what the students know; I care about what they DON'T know."

"Good Teaching and Learning is not about covering the material; it's about uncovering the material."

Favorite Fact:
The most attentive student in your class is attentive only 65% of the time. Capture the attention of all students by planning teaching/learning interventions with different strategies to re-energize and re-engage students in the content and class.

1. Organize learning teams at the beginning of semester.

2. Encourage individual responsibility to teams by assigning team roles: leader, recorder, speaker, encourager.

3. Change roles of team members every two weeks so that all students get to practice and learn important team-building skills.

4. Assign one student on each team to be the Bridge Builder or Bridge Keeper. This role is an essential social role for engagement and positive interdependence on learning teams. Rotate this role on each team.

5. Start the semester by asking students to complete a Learning Style Survey. Discuss the results and applications to content and class.

6. Use a Talking Stone as a strategy to include all students in discussions.

7. Invite students to write questions that need attention on the board before you arrive each day. Start class with a question-and-answer discussion.

8. Ask students to write comments or questions and hand them in anonymously at the end of class. Begin the next class discussing the questions. Or, ask students to work through the questions in teams of 4-5 as an active learning assignment at the beginning of the next class.

9. Empower students by giving choice of break time, test dates, and types of tests, if possible.

10. Ask students to write their own class rules. Return to the rules periodically to make sure the class continues to practice living by their own rules.

11. Personalize your class. It's okay to be human. We each, occasionally, do "stupid things." When you misspeak or don't know the answer, admit it! Students will appreciate your humanness.

12. Greet students as they come in. Address each student personally.

13. Get to know something special about each student; make an emotional connection.

14. Get to know students' names.

15. .In the hall, cafeteria, or stores take time to greet students.

16. Take a box of tissue to class. Ask each student to "take as many as you need." Then ask students to share one "interesting fact" about themselves for each tissue. Use this, or another "get acquainted" activity, to help students feel comfortable with each other in class.

17. Promote resiliency and get to know your students by asking each one to share what is meaningful in their wallet/purse that gives them strength.

18. Have students create slogans about the class or program. Have them perform a skit or play to share their slogan with others in the class.

19. Provide a few minutes at the beginning of class for students to share news about their lives and learning. Good news builds community and helps you get to know your students.

20. Start class with Comfort, Care, and Concern by asking students to share how they are doing in class, college, or in general. This strategy is especially helpful during the busy or stressful times of the semester. Taking a moment to acknowledge issues helps students see how much you care.

21. To get to know your students, ask them to write interesting facts about themselves on a 3x5 note card. Ask students to write and share information from one side of the card with their group. Ask students to write information they would like to share with you on the other side of the card.

22. Establish e-mail contacts between students on teams and between yourself and each student.

23. Model a caring attitude. Teachers are "servant leaders" who model the very best of communication and relationships for their students.

24. Organize students on teams of 4-5 for the purpose of classroom interaction during the lecture or discussion. Use these informal teams to provide connections among students and built-in teams for small group discussions.

25. Provide each learning team with a colorful pocket folder. The All-in-One Folder organizes papers to be passed out and collected during class. It is also a good classroom organization strategy and helps teams become interdependent.

26. Use the All-in-One Folder as a getting acquainted activity by providing time for students on learning teams to get to know each other, and then draw or write interesting facts about themselves and their team on the pocket folder. Students can personalize the folder with a Team Name.

27. Develop assessment and testing strategies to provide for a range of learning styles.

28. If you use multiple-choice tests, leave option "e" blank for "best answer to be provided by the student."

29. Give a "Choice Test"—ask students to choose their preferred test format: multiple choice, T/F, or short answer/essay. Each exam assesses the same content, but each provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate learning in the testing format best suited to their learning style.

30. Have students generate their own test questions.

31. Provide a space at the end of the test for students to write and answer their own question. "If there was something you studied that was NOT on the test, use this space to write and answer your own test question." This test question can be for bonus points.

32. Include examples of well written text responses and poorly written responses as an attachment to the course outline or syllabus.

33. Try to "front load" your class with more assessments during the middle of the course. If you must have a final exam, have students take off a week before the last class meeting. This way you can provide feedback prior to students leaving class and also have an opportunity to use the last few class days to wrap-up, recognize learning, and celebrate success.

34. Give tests early in the semester as sample tests or pretests to help students focus their learning.

35. At end of each class, have each student write a multiple-choice question on the content discussed. Use some of these questions (with modifications) on the actual tests.

36. Let students have Magic Moments during exams. Tell students early in the semester

that they will get 60 seconds—a Magic Moment—to look at their notes, books, or other resources during the examination. Late in the examination time, give the Magic Moment so that students can check their responses and look at their materials. The key to this strategy is to encourage students to prepare for the 60 seconds by reading, outlining, and preparing good study materials in advance. As they prepare for the Magic Moment, students are learning.

37. When using team or group learning, allow students to self-select their groups. Or, randomly organize groups by using playing cards or colored candies.

38. Begin team learning strategies by asking students to establish Ground Rules for working together. Students need to share their concerns related to past group experiences, explore ways to have positive team and group experiences, and commit to Ground Rules so that the teams and all individuals on the team can experience success. Ask teams to revisit the Ground Rules periodically through the semester to reaffirm the qualities and behaviors of effective team work.

39. When introducing team work, ask students to role play their experience in small groups. Ask the rest of the class to critique the group with positive and constructive feedback.

40. If teams and groups do presentations in class, establish a feedback system so that each group gets feedback not only from the teacher, but also from other teams and groups in the class.

41. Graffiti Game (Brainstorming). Write each component or topic for study or discussion on separate pages of flip-chart paper. Post the flip charts around the classroom. Assign students to groups and ask them to move as in a Gallery Walk around the room to each of the flip charts. Students add Graffiti Ideas to the charts. End the activity when the original group returns to their first poster. Each group summarizes and shares a Graffiti Poster with the class.

42. Give student teams paper, markers, or other resources and ask them to demonstrate a concept through illustration with words or pictures.

43. Ask students to complete a reading assignment and then write a brief one-page paper on the "Muddiest Points" in the reading. Have students bring their Muddiest Points to class. Begin class with a discussion of the Muddy Points.

44. Begin class by asking students to exchange their Muddy Points from the reading, previous class, or observations, with their neighbor. Ask students to use their resources to "clean up" the Muddy Points.

45. Ask students to join teams; ask teams to consolidate Muddy Points into a "Muddy Mess." Ask teams to trade Muddy Messes. Each team works to find answers and shares their work with the class. This is a fun pro-academic way to add team competition to class.

46. Create a "Problem Box" for problems, issues, or Muddy Points. Ask students to place their problems in the Problem Box. Select a few problems at the beginning class for large or small group discussions. Take a few minutes at the end of the week and ask groups to come up with potential solutions to the problems in the Problem Box.

47. Make the Problem Box a "stump the teacher" strategy by asking students to come up with complex issues or problems that could stump the teacher. Let students stump you. Give teams the task of finding answers to the Problem Box as extra credit.

48. Create a "Lessons Learned" or "Teachable Moments Treasure Chest." Students place a lesson learned, teachable moments, important points, light bulb moments in the Treasure Chest. Take a few out each lesson to share. Celebrate the learning.

49. Create a "Fish Bowl" discussion. Ask a group of students to sit in the centre of the class and role play or discuss an issue while the rest of the students sit in a circle around the group watching. Lead a class discussion on the Fish Bowl issue or role play.

50. Use multiple ways of delivering material to students to aid all learning styles.

Fifty Nifty Faculty Favorites is a collection of strategies from workshops facilitated by Dr. Idahlynn Karre. These 50 Faculty Favorites are from Sault Ste Marie College in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, Canada. All Rights Reserved.

MULTI-CAMPUS TEAM BUILDING:

A Tool That Costs Nothing

BY MIKE FELKER

Background

At South Plains College in Levelland, Texas, the English department has nineteen full-time and, depending on the semester, around twenty part-time faculty scattered across four college campuses and a dozen high school campuses, with three more extension campuses in the works. **At one time, each college campus had its own provost or director and the faculty at that campus reported to him; in fact, most had never met their peers on the other campuses.** Under our last president, all the teachers in a given discipline were merged into one department on the main campus, regardless of where their offices and teaching assignments lay.

Although our administration said that we were now all one happy family, the reality was very different.

Faculty from branch campuses were used to a great degree of autonomy and resented being merged into a larger department led by a chair they had never met and whose office was on a campus to which they had never been. Many forms of paperwork had to change, and paperwork that had never been done before now had to be done and submitted to the department chair, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the library, and other places. Three faculty members from one campus, for example, now found that they were expected to provide a paper trail where before one had never been needed because each knew exactly what the other was doing. Branch campuses had expected faculty members to teach, and nothing more; now they were expected to advise, serve on committees, and participate in faculty development activities. **There was a great deal of anxiety, some resentment, and some resistance to thinking of themselves as part of one big happy family.**

As department chair, I did "all the right things" to overcome this resistance. I taught at campuses other than the home campus. I sent cards on faculty members' birthdays and held back-to-school parties at my home. I visited the other campuses, joining faculty there for lunch and round-table discussions about issues which concerned them. I treated all full-time department members and their spouses or significant others to an end-of-the-year dinner. I solicited input from all members of the department and involved faculty at all campuses in textbook selection, in setting learning objectives, and in hiring new faculty.

No matter what I tried, there was still the feeling of "us and them"

between campuses, primarily because there was still so little interaction between faculty membears who were scattered over a large geographical area. Email facilitated a great deal of interaction, but between individual faculty members and the department chair, and not between the teachers themselves.

A New Tool

In the fall of 2004, a faculty member came to me with an idea she had in response to our ongoing discussion about team building. Dr. Sandra Stephenson asked if I would mind if she tried putting together a monthly departmental newsletter, to be sent out as an email attachment so there would be no cost to the department. Each month, she wanted to include one faculty member's autobiography, a feature article, a discussion forum, and whatever news members of the department wanted to include.

With my blessing, Dr. Stephenson asked faculty for articles and responses to questions, and the first issue of the No Name Newsletter was emailed to the full-time members of the department in January 2005.

Volume I, issue 1 featured a short autobiography of the newest member of the department, a feature article on "Keeping a Journal" which I contributed at Dr. Stephenson's request, reviews of three books of interest to English teachers, two humorous "Personals," two "Announcements," one asking faculty to purchase Girl Scout Cookies, and another seeking sponsors for International Exchange Students. A state Fire Marshall had just ordered our campus to keep all office and classroom doors closed at all times, in direct opposition to our attorney who had advised we never close an office door if a student was in the office with us, so the first "Forum" was a discussion of how we planned to solve this dilemma. Twelve of nineteen faculty responded to the topic and all of our campuses at that time were represented. Now everyone knew the new instructor and everyone was involved in departmental issues.

The February issue profiled a department member known for his humor and puns; he began his autobiography by saying he didn't remember his birth because he was young at the time. The challenge had been issued, and those who received a "Tag, you're it" message from now on tried to make their autobiographies funny, exciting, or

both. In the feature article, an instructor told what it was like to teach in Japan, and the Forum attempted to set a departmental policy on cell phones in the classroom; again, a majority of the department's members participated and all campuses were represented. The issue also contained book reviews, professional development opportunities, recommendations for websites which discussed student conduct, and a list of the entries in the "Name the Newsletter" contest. It also had acquired a second editor, Linda McGann.

By March, *Fragments and RunOns* was eagerly awaited by all members of the department. People constantly asked the editors, "When's it coming out?" The editors were bombarded with ideas for Forum topics. Book and movie reviews were being emailed in. The editors decided that, from now on, the newsletter would be "what it is." There would be no set number of pages for each issue; because it was online, printing costs weren't a problem if that issue was particularly long. The newsletter has never run less than six pages since that time, and usually runs ten or more. Many faculty on all campuses routinely print the newsletter, three-hole punch it, and save it in a binder so they can reread it again and again.

Since its inception, our departmental newsletter has settled into a routine of monthly publication September through May, with a biography, the forum, book, movie, and restaurant reviews, notices of tenure and promotion, and personal notices.

October 2005 saw a new feature: "Legacy," a biography of a retired faculty member who had helped shape the department into what it is today. By Spring of 2006, responses to the newsletter had grown to the point that a third editor was added. Dr. Mase Lewter is at a different

campus, and the three editors communicate by phone and email as they assemble each edition. The April issue included an autobiography of the department's secretary, giving her "equal billing" with the instructional faculty.

Since that first issue, personal Forum topics, designed to let faculty members get to know each other, have included "Why I love to teach at SPC," "Simple pleasures," "Best Christmas memories," "What we did (and what we did not do) on our summer 'vacations'," and "Influences" (inspired by the death of a professor who had taught three members of the department). Professional Forum topics have included "What characteristics or attitudes do you wish our students possessed?", "How can the teacher introduce, promote, enhance or encourage an attitude or characteristic of good learning?", "You've gotta teach this essay," and the aforementioned office door and cell phone policy topics.

Never have fewer than half the department faculty participated in the Forum and never has anyone turned down the invitation to write an autobiography or a feature article.

Full-time faculty on all campuses have gotten to know each other better through reading Fragments and RunOns than through any other activity we've tried. More than ever before, the members of the English department feel that they are part of a team of friends and professionals. The only cost is the editors' investment of six to eight hours a month to put the articles together and format the newsletter specifically for the computer screen, something they think of as a labor of love. To quote Professor McGann, "We're having too much fun to keep count of the hours we spend."