

CTE "Learning about Learning"

Newsletter of the Center for Teaching Excellence, Bronx Community College, CUNY

Dr. Harriet Shenkman

Faculty Director

Mr. Jerry Simotas

Educational Technology Director

Dr. Lisa Greenwald

Acting Assistant Director of CTE

CTE Advisory Board

Dr. John Athanasourelis

English

Dr. Eugene Adams

Collaborative Programs

Dr. Kathleen Berger

Social Sciences

Dr. Rex Butt

Communication Arts & Sciences

Dr. Grace Cukras

Education & Reading

Prof. Diane D'Alessio

Education & Reading

Dr. Richard Donovan

Center for Global Education

Dr. Anthony Durante

Chemistry

Dr. Marilyn Gagion

Business & Information Systems

Dr. J. Juechter

Institutional Development

Prof. Doreen LaBlanc

Business & Information Systems

Dr. Georgene Osborne

Education & Reading

Prof. Helen Papas-Kavalis

Nursing & Allied Health Sciences

Dr. Kwi Park-Kim

Business & Information Systems

Dr. Maria Psarelli

Mathematics

Dr. Neal Phillip

Chemistry & Chemical Technology

Dean Nadine Posner

Office of Academic Affairs

Dr. Stephen Powers

Education and Reading

Dr. Phyllis Read

English

Dean Nancy Ritze

Institutional Research

Ms. Jan Robertson

Writing Center

Dean Carin Savage

Institutional Development

Dr. Lynne Ticke

Social Sciences

Dr. Howard Wach

History

Prof. Mitchell Wenzel

Title V

FACULTY DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Harriet Shenkman
Faculty Director
Center for Teaching Excellence

During our 2004 CTE Week, we were fortunate to have two impressive guest speakers who brought the wisdom of their insights to the BCC learning community. The event on December 2nd in which Edward P. Jones, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author, read from his work illustrated a major point Dr. Ken Bain made in his keynote address at the



Pulitzer Prize Winning Author, Edward P. Jones speaking during CTE Week

CTE Gala Luncheon that same day. Dr. Bain summarized the conclusions of his fifteen-year study of what the best college teachers do. He spoke about the "aha" that is fostered in learners by the best college teaching. The "aha" might be considered an illuminative moment; an insight or realization that brings about change. Dr. Bain also spoke about creating a critical learning environment. In his book, he writes, "the best educators thought of teaching as anything they might do to help and encourage students to learn. Teaching is engaging students, engineering an environment in which

they learn."

Based upon student response, I would venture to say we created a critical learning environment the morning Edward P. Jones appeared before an audience of over three hundred. I made an informal inquiry into the reaction of students for the purpose of deconstructing the event. I was interested in how it was experienced by students and the nature of their "illuminative moments."

The three student essay winners clearly experienced significant moments of illumination in connection with the literature they had read. One student described a character that was killed by her



Keynote Address Speaker, Dr Ken Bain

boyfriend and wrote with great conviction about her thoughts on domestic violence. Another student stated, ➡

In This Issue

Faculty Director's Corner	1
From Title V Project Director's Desk	2
Upcoming Workshops	2
Mathematics and Science Teaching	3
"Assessing the Assessment"	3
Meritorious Writers & Teachers	4
CPE Workshop for Adjunct Faculty	4
Summer Technology Workshop	5
Instructional Technology Day	5
Grant Writing	5
Faculty Development Projects	6
Announcements	6

FACULTY DIRECTOR'S CORNER

From Page 1

"Edward P. Jones' short stories are about relationships amongst people, how they can work against the threat of loss to retain hope or purpose...." and she movingly told of her own personal loss. For the third student, the work of the author illustrated how people in the African American community tend to support each other in difficult circumstances.

The public recognition that the three essay winners achieved was reward in itself, but for one student, according to her instructor, it was an awakening. During the animated classroom discussion, she was usually the most reticent. When her essay was chosen, her peers became aware of her for the first time. She had many thoughts stimulated by her reading that had never been voiced before.

For the students in the audience that day, there were also revelations. They were surprised that the author was so "down to earth" both in what he said and in his demeanor. They were impressed that he had achieved so much coming from a modest background that they could identify as similar to their own. The author was raised by a single mother who worked in menial jobs to support her family, and he personally endured many hardships before he became an acclaimed writer.

An ESL student wrote, "He inspired [in] me a soft feeling with his words. In fact, each word from the book showed me the real world, because [not everything in the world is rosy]...it was so emotional when some young ladies read their essay about what they think about this book... tears came from my eyes."

By having the opportunity to ask questions of the author, students acquired insights into the writing process. They were impressed when Mr. Jones stated that writing was a "nasty" business, identifying with the frustration of having to revise their own written work. One student asked how much of the story the author read was based on his own experience and was surprised to hear that eighty percent was from the author's imagination.

Lastly, and most significant, one student said he was surprised to see so many people come out to hear about a book. Students were able to hear an acclaimed author read from his work and answer questions, and they could also get their book signed at this event. The entire experience turned out to be an illuminative moment. Students could see themselves in a larger community that valued literature and learning.

As I reflect upon CTE Week, a collaborative effort across the campus, I am convinced of the immense importance of creating and sustaining a critical learning environment. It encourages the individual "aha," minor or major, personal or abstract, to rise to the surface. It fosters change in the understanding, attitude, feeling and perception of students. In my mind, that change is the essence of learning.

From TITLE V Project Director's Desk

Mitchell Wenzel

Our second Center for Teaching Excellence week at the end of November was a huge success, and a special thanks goes to all of those that made it a superb event once again. The CTE is being constructed in the lower level of Philosophy Hall, with an expected completion date of June 2005.

The first five year Title V grant (October 1999-September 2004) has ended, but our Title V Cooperative Grant with Lehman College will continue until September 30, 2007. We had an external evaluator do a complete evaluation of the five year project, which was positive. The following quote is from the Title V Retrospective Evaluation report: "As a result of the diverse faculty development workshops in technology, teaching and learning strategies, etc., faculty at BCC have been communicating both within and between departments – a phenomenon which was often not the case prior to the grant. This, in turn, has contributed to faculty buy-in and boosted morale on campus." The complete report is available in Dean Nancy Ritze's office.

Some highlights from our most recent Title V Cooperative Grant with Lehman College evaluation report:

- One-year retention rates for entering first-time, full-time freshmen increased from 62.7% for the Fall 2000 cohort to 65.7% for the Fall 2002 cohort.
- Average number of credits earned increased from 27.10 for the Fall 2000 student body to 28.05 for the Fall 2002 student body.
- The AA/AS transfer rate to CUNY BA/BS programs increased from 42.2% for 2000-1 grads to 50.3% for the 2002-03 grads.
- Enrollment increases in several areas, including:
 - Total enrollment increased from 6,942 (Fall 2001) to 7,951 (Fall 2003)
 - Part-time enrollment increased from 2,610 (Fall 2001) to 3,227 (Fall 2003)
 - Minority Enrollment increased from 5,896 (Fall 2001) to 6,910 (Fall 2003).
 - Completion (6-year grad rate) increased from 20.7% for the F96 entering cohort to 24.8% for the F97 entering cohort.
 - CPE pass rates increased from 60% in 2003 to the most recent results of 77% in 2004.
 - In Fall 2003 and Spring 2004, there were 14 faculty participants in Dr. Harriet Shenkman's workshop and 11 in the web-enhanced workshop.

Dean Ritze has mentioned the following: "As I have indicated on many occasions, these major institutional improvements/outcomes are not directly linked to any particular or specific activity, but result from the systemic approaches employed in our Title V grant."

Upcoming Activities

*** CTE Sponsors ***

The New York Times Across the Disciplines

FACULTY WORKSHOP

Thursday, February 24th, 12 - 2 pm
President's Conference Room (PCR)
Lunch will be served!!

Celebrate Thriving & Surviving at BCC

NEW FACULTY SALON

Thursday, April 14th, 12 - 1:30 pm
RBSC - 208

Celebrating Mathematics and Science Teaching

Diane D'Alessio

Department of Education & Reading

On Monday, November 29, 2004, BCC's Future Teachers Club, in collaboration with the Chemistry, Mathematics and Computer Science Clubs, and Lehman College's Department of Mathematics, sponsored Education Day. The theme was "Celebrating Mathematics and Science Teaching." Through a series of interactive workshops, and an engaging keynote address by Dr. Christina Sormani, Professor of Mathematics, Lehman College and The City University Graduate Center, these future teachers recognized the value of using hands-on activities to improve student understanding of mathematics and science concepts.

By using interlocking cubes, Dr. Persinger engaged future teachers in activities that demonstrated how middle school students' understanding of geometric shapes could be enhanced through the use of manipulatives. Through the use of Microlab, Dr. Phillip transformed Roscoe Brown Student Center into a science lab enabling participants to



Dr Phillip being assisted by Kimberly Cosme during Education Day Workshop

measure chlorine levels in water.

The morning workshops were followed by a luncheon and Dr. Sormani's keynote address. In her talk, "Why, Why, Why teach mathematics?" Dr. Sormani emphasized the importance of employing a process approach to teaching mathematics as she involved participants in problem solving activities using the

Pythagorean Theorem. In the afternoon workshop, "Sunrise, Sunset," Dr. Persinger demonstrated how technology can be used to enhance high-quality mathematics instruction. Dr. Persinger helped participants measure the number of hours of sunlight in different areas of the world through the use of a computer program.



Dr Persinger conducting Education Day Workshop during CTE Week

The enthusiasm of the workshop facilitators with their interactive presentations helped these future teachers realize the benefits of utilizing concrete and graphic



Dr Sormani of Lehman College giving the Keynote Address during Education Day Workshop

materials in the teaching of science and mathematics.

The Future Teachers Club extends their appreciation to Dr. Sharon Persinger, Dr. Neal Phillip, and Dr. Christina Sormani for their commitment in recruiting and preparing tomorrow's science and mathematics teachers at Bronx Community College.



"Assessing The Assessment"

Georgene Osbourne

Department of Education & Reading

The CTE Week presentation entitled, "Can Multiple-Choice Tests Assess Higher-Level Thinking?" was attended by faculty and staff representatives from Biology/Medical Lab Technology, Nursing, Chemistry, Counseling/Student Development, and Education and Reading. Cecelia Carew-Joyner, Associate Professor in the Nursing department, conducted an interactive presentation using the quizzes and tests provided in advance from participants. Grounded in *Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive and Affective Domains*, participants collaboratively conducted item review procedures to critique the level of thinking required for a sample of multiple-choice items taken from an Astronomy test and Biology and Library quizzes.

What participants found most helpful included the discussion on how to target the level of difficulty in constructing questions that reflect a related cognitive or affective domain, how to develop practical classroom applications, and how to interpret the data. The handouts developed by Professor Carew-Joyner were effective in facilitating in-depth conversations that lasted beyond the appointed hour for the session. The answer to the question posed by the title is that the development of such questions is quite a challenge, but may very well be worth the effort as one way to assess higher-level thinking awareness of its nonlinear process. It also availed us of a number of metacognitive strategies to enhance in-depth understanding of new material and encourage students to become independent learners.

Meritorious Winners Celebrated at CTE's Gala Luncheon

H. J. P. Mullins
Department of English

Following a fabulous, well-attended assembly of students, faculty, and interested parties from around the city to greet and hear from 2004's Pulitzer Prize for Fiction author, Edward P. Jones, invited guests gathered at a Gala Luncheon to honor him, the three student essay winners, and keynote speaker Dr. Ken Bain, Director for Center for Teaching Excellence at New York University and author of *What the Best College Teachers Do*.

Held in the Roscoe Brown Student Center, the guests, surrounded by balloons and festive decorations, enjoyed a delicious lunch. Afterwards, BCC President Carolyn G. Williams greeted the gathering, and welcomed Mr. Jones and Dr. Bain. She stated she was "amazed and delighted" with this year's CTE week of workshops and activities, and congratulated the faculty for "two years of outstanding accomplishments," and for "centering their commitment on our students." President Williams concluded, "Our faculty is a community of learners and doers who bring success to our campus."

Dr. Harriet Shenkman, CTE's Faculty Director, presented the student essay winners, Jeannie Romero, Cynthia Franco, and Easter Z. Wood, and their teachers. Dr. Shenkman reminded the group that Mr. Jones had kept his promise, made to her during a campus visit 10 years earlier, that when he "became famous," he would return to BCC. She also remarked that one of his important messages to the students was, "Education as a way of overcoming and making his mother (who had been unable to read and write) proud."

President Williams then presented each student essay winner with their prize of two hundred dollars which was greeted by a huge round of applause.

The History Department's Dr. Howard

Wach introduced Dr. Ken Bain as an "historian by training and a scholar of teaching." He stated that Dr. Bain's book on the best college teachers was the result of a five year research project, and particularly praised the fact that, "It has not an ounce of jargon in it."

Dr. Bain, perhaps proving this point, stated simply that he had taken on this project because, "I was interested in what they (the best teachers) did and how they thought." A few of his findings were that highly effective teachers "care enough to trust their students." They also "let their students explore in their own minds what it takes to learn," as well as "know how to ask good, powerful questions and to make good promises," such as, "If you come along with me on this adventure, you will learn to put things together yourselves, and create environments from which we can all learn." He also seemed pleased to note that when, during lunch, he asked one of the essay contest winners to identify her best teachers, she answered, "Oh, I've had so many."

The festivities continued with the presentation of the Crystal Apple Award, by Vice President Marcia V. Keizs, to Dr. Harriet Shenkman for her "Leadership as a master teacher, receiver of grants, producer of a recognized body of work, and contributions to the College." Dr. Keizs added, "She put us on the map at the American Association of Community Colleges. She really moved us along by working together on our campus and beyond our borders."

Dr. Shenkman acknowledged her Department of Education and Reading, saying that, "It's a great pleasure to work with them to create a vibrant environment for learning." She also thanked the many contributors who had made this day and the entirety of CTE Week an outstanding and smoothly flowing event. Finally, she introduced another special guest, her daughter, who she proudly announced had just passed the New York State Bar Exam.

The celebration ended with a statement by Prof. Mitchell Wenzel, Title V Director, on the official location of the CTE now under construction. "They're putting up the studs," he said, "so hopefully

around May, we will have a place for faculty, where plans will happen for technology and faculty development."



Title V's Prof. Mitch Wentzel Addressing the Audience at the Gala Luncheon

CPE Workshop for Adjunct Faculty

Rex Butt
CPE Liaison
Dept of Communications, Arts & Sciences

This session was held on Thursday evening, December 7, and was open to all faculty but was designed to target adjunct faculty. I had planned to present information for the first half of the session, providing basic information about the CUNY Proficiency Examination and explaining how it relates to effective classroom strategies. What actually happened was a lively give-and-take session in which we explored ways to engage students in course content across the curriculum and to get them to take ownership of the learning process. Discussion covered varied topics such as syllabus design, devising effective group projects, and encouraging peer review ideas.

"What does any of that have to do with the CPE?" you may be asking. Since accepting the position of CPE Liaison, it has been my contention that rather than a writing exam, the CPE is a "thinking" exam. The more comfortable our students become with constructing and dismantling ideas, the better they perform on the exam and the better they are prepared for upper-level work. Anyone who wants to share or receive information on the CPE or teaching strategies can reach me at EXT 5757 or rex.butt@bcc.cuny.edu.

Summer Technology Workshop

Howard Wach

Department of History

Last November, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* published an article entitled "When Good Technology Means Bad Teaching" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 November 2004, p. A31.) The article described how colleges have invested heavily in new technology infrastructure—"smart classrooms," updated computer labs, lots of software—but very little on training faculty to use the new equipment. The result has been predictable: poor teaching and dissatisfied students with little patience for faculty guilty of "PowerPoint abuse" and other misdemeanors.

BCC and the Center for Teaching Excellence are poised to address exactly this problem. This summer, a week-long workshop will bring faculty from across the college together to learn how to strengthen their teaching by applying technology in focused and pedagogically sound ways. The institute will start with the premise that technology is only as good as the teaching it serves, and that the same principles that support good teaching apply to teaching with technology. Therefore, specific courses will be targeted, and specific technology-based teaching goals will be at the center of faculty work. Participants will bring their new ideas and techniques into the classroom in September and will become mentors to colleagues in their departments. They may also become facilitators in future summer institutes.

Most of the specific skills and content of the program will be determined by departments and participants, since the appropriate use of PowerPoint in one course may have little to do with the use of Blackboard in another. One element will be constant, however. "Information Literacy" has been identified by CUNY and BCC as a critical skill for faculty and students. A survey administered to OCD 01 students in Spring 2004 showed that while nearly 80% had used the Internet for academic research, only 20% had ever evaluated a web site for accuracy or truthfulness. With assistance from the BCC Library staff, activities that

sharpen these absolutely essential skills will be a central part of the workshop for everyone.

Bringing appropriate technologies into good teaching, and discovering ways for technologies to strengthen teaching and learning, are win-win strategies. This new faculty development program promises to create a permanent way for BCC to build these strengths by balancing investment in equipment with investment in training.

Instructional Technology Day

Neal Phillip

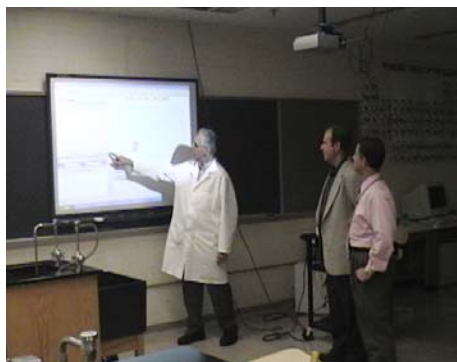
Department of Chemistry

These sessions were held on Wednesday December 1 and included the demonstration of SmartBoard Technology currently used by faculty within the Chemistry Dept by Prof. Anthony Durante. Prof Durante also described his ongoing work in collaboration with the BCC Library and Learning Center to convert old 35mm slides of Chemistry Lectures into electronic form.

Prof. Neal Phillip demonstrated the use of Microlab technology currently used in classroom within the Chemistry Dept. Microlab is a digital interface that allows one to perform up to monitor and record up to five different chemical parameters simultaneously.

Prof. Stephen Poweers demonstrated the use of Blackboard, the CUNY selected web-based learning system.

Prof. Ben Yarmolinsky presented on the classroom capabilities of Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI).



Prof. Durante demonstrating the use of the SmartBoard™

Jan Rbertson, Janice Mauras and Mr Eugene Adams of College Now facilitated a Communication Fitness Workshop. Communication fitness is a web-based instruction program with drill down exercises, grammar lessons, essay writing and a whole lot more.

CTE Technology Director, Mr. Jerry Simotas gave a hands on workshop on creating a Blackboard Course site.

Overall the presentations were well received, refreshing and stimulating.



Prof. Durante demonstrating the conversion of old Chemistry Dept 35mm slides into electronic form

Dispelling The Mysteries of Grant Writing

Kathleen Williams

Department of History

This workshop was held on Tuesday, November 30 and was sponsored by the Committee on Instruction and Professional Development to provide advice and guidance for faculty/staff interested in applying for external grants. Professors Reid Strieby and Dick Donovan made presentations.

They drew on their years of grant writing experience to explain how to find the best sources of funding, how to read and comply with the donor's expectations. They spoke in some detail about applying to government agencies for funding and also about applying to private donor organizations.

Prof. Vaso Thomas spoke to the group mainly about writing grants for social sciences. She also provided attendees with a comprehensive and very helpful checklist of grant writing suggestions. Each of these presentations was followed by a very lively and productive question and answer session.

CTE Week Writing Contest

John Athanasourelis
Department of English

On Thursday, Dec. 2, 2004 a large crowd in the hastily-assembled lower level of Colston Hall heard three insightful and moving essays presented by the winners of the CTE essay contest, Sinthia Franco, Jeanie Romero, and Easter Z. Wood.

Many students had contributed essays



President Carolyn Williams & Sinthia Franco

based on their readings of short stories by Edward P. Jones, the Pulitzer-Prize winning author of *Lost in the City* and the guest speaker and presenter of the prizes. Ms. Franco, Ms. Romero, and Ms. Wood produced essays that demonstrated careful analysis of "A Butterfly on F Street," "The Night Rhonda Ferguson Was Killed," and other Edward P. Jones short stories and drew parallels to their own lives with great linguistic facility. The attentive audience, which included the proud professors of the contest winners, greeted each speaker with extended applause.

The essay contest committee, which included Marie Carolyn Anyanechi, John Athanasourelis, Grace Cukras, Jan Robertson, Harriet Shenkman, Lynne Ticke, and Maria Treglia had difficulty choosing only three of the best of the many fine submissions and all students

IMPORTANT DATES

Center for Teaching Excellence Advisory Board Meetings

February 24, 2005, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
March 17, 2005, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
April 21, 2005, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Language Hall (Room PCR)

Title V Faculty Development Projects

This session brought together participants in the three Title V funded faculty Development Projects at BCC and Lehman College: The Reading Learning and Thinking Workshop, the Action Research Summer Institute, and the Online Teaching Workshop.

Participants discussed methods these projects use to improve teaching practice and student learning, such as the deployment of metacognitive strategies in discipline-based content courses, systematic investigation of classroom activity and interventions designed to improve student performance, and the introduction of web-based instructional methods and materials.



Dean Susan Polirstok from Lehman and
Other Participants in Workshop Session

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Vice President Marcia Keizs on her appointment as President of York College of CUNY. All of us at CTE will miss her support, her energy, and her vision. We wish her well as she embarks on this new endeavor.

WELCOME

Welcome to **Dr. Lisa Greenwald** as Acting Assistant Director of CTE. Lisa will be assisting us at CTE on a part time basis. She holds a Ph.D. in European History and has experience as a lecturer and as a consultant on education reform.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DOMINICAN AUTHOR RETURNS TO BCC

Angie Cruz, author of *Soledad* and *Let It Rain Coffee*

will read from her work and answer questions on Wednesday, May 4th,
12:00 - 2:00 pm

Schwendler Auditorium
Her books will be available in the BCC bookstore.

ACTION RESEARCH SUMMER INSTITUTE June 6th - 10th, 2005

CTE, under the sponsorship of Title V, will once again be holding an Action Research Summer Institute. It is an opportunity for faculty to investigate pedagogical questions in regard to their own teaching in a research community consisting of Bronx CC and Lehman faculty. There is an intensive week devoted to developing a research plan to be implemented in the classroom in Fall, 2005. A substantial stipend is provided. Look for the application or call Dr. Harriet Shenkman or Dr. Howard Wach, Institute leaders.

MEDIA ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM

CTE has obtained a grant from CUNY to fund media literacy. Twelve faculty and their students from across the disciplines will have an opportunity to receive the *New York Times* each week for ten weeks at no charge. An introductory workshop for faculty will be held on February 24th, 12—2 pm (Room PCR). Anyone interested in this opportunity, should contact Dr Harriet Shenkman (x5691) as soon as possible.

CTE "Learning about Learning"

Published by:

Center for Teaching Excellence
Phone: (718) 289-5951
Email: CTE@bcc.cuny.edu
Web: www.bcc.cuny.edu/centerforteaching

CTE Week Issue Editor

Dr. Neal Phillip
Dept of Chemistry
neal.phillip@bcc.cuny.edu