



Newsletter of the Center for Teaching Excellence, Bronx Community College, CUNY SPRING 2008

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FACULTY DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Dr. Harriet Shenkman
Faculty Director
Center for Teaching Excellence

Center for Teaching Excellence – Spring 2008 Update

In Spring 2008, CTE will continue to sponsor and co-sponsor a rich schedule of activities and seminars, including New Faculty Salon, Adjunct Workshops, Quantitative Reasoning Seminars, Faculty Diversity Workshops, and Women's Hall of Fame.

New initiatives include Seminars on Hall of Fame for Great Americans Architecture with Lisa Easton, A Smart Board Workshop led by J. Juechter, and Math and Pedagogy Seminars led by Vrunda Prabhu and Roman Kossak of Mathematics. Eight faculty from the Mathematics Department will be exploring instructional practices in the classroom and course policies with the goal of improving instruction.

The Continuum of Greatness Initiative will involve Katherine Culkin, Vincent Bonelli, and David Gordon from the History Department and Shylaja Akkaraju from Biology and Suzanne Russel from NEH Seminar. They will be engaged in researching figures in the Hall of Fame for Great Americans and developing a narrative of greatness that explicates the concept and reveals changing notions of greatness in contemporary times. They will create models that will help integrate the study of the Hall of Fame with the BCC general education effort.

The Freshman Learning Communities will continue with six clusters. Jordi Getman will be leading faculty in developing a Learning Community Web site that seeks to make student learning and faculty collaboration transparent. Ted Ingram, Vrunda Prabhu, and Elizabeth Smith will be joining the Learning Community faculty-counselor collaborative team.

In cooperation with the National Center for Education Alliances, CTE will be hosting Dr. Jochen Fried, Director of Educational Initiatives at the Salzburg Center. He is scheduled to give two seminars for faculty on developing a global lens.

Finally, Tamar Rothenberg and Harriet Shenkman will be presenting a paper entitled "Greatness in the Bronx: Humanities Projects Based upon a Historic Hall of Fame," at the 7th Annual London International Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference in London, in May.



Upcoming Meetings and Events

Learning Communities: Feb. 14, Mar. 20, Apr. 10, May 1

Perkins: PBL/Quantitative Reasoning
Mar. 11, 14, Apr. 15, 18

CTE Advisory Board: 2-4 pm
Feb. 7, Mar. 6, Apr. 3, May 8

Adjunct Faculty Workshops
February 25, 10-12 noon
March 17, 2-4 pm

Multicultural Sensitivity
Mar. 26, Apr. 28

All the above events are held at CTE Center:
Located at Philosophy Hall, Lower Level Left

June dates to be announced...

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BCC LAUNCHES QUANTITATIVE REASONING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM INITIATIVE

By Professor Don Read, Quantitative Reasoning Coordinator

As the spring semester begins, Bronx Community College moves into the second semester of its fledgling Quantitative - Reasoning-across-the-Curriculum (QRAC) program, initially proposed by BCC faculty members and later mandated by an edict from the CUNY Chancellor's office.

The Quantitative Reasoning movement is also commonly called Quantitative Literacy and, particularly in the former British Commonwealth nations, Numeracy. It recognizes that

- A. the technology-driven, data-rich contemporary world requires at least minimal abilities to understand, analyze, critique and generate quantitative analyses and presentations, and
- B. for whatever complex of reasons, large numbers (perhaps the vast majority) of students arriving at college these days are inadequately prepared for this quantitative brave new world.

The implications of this lack of preparation are so profound—not just at BCC or CUNY but at most colleges throughout this country and in many other countries—that requiring one or two remedial math courses is an insufficient solution. The situation requires mobilization and participation of the whole faculty, just as a generation ago it was recognized that we were dealing with a problem in student writing so severe that an across-the-curriculum solution was required.



To begin to acknowledge and grapple with this reality (and, not coincidentally, to comply with the Chancellor's mandate), BCC began in the fall of 2007 to offer, under the auspices of the Center for Teaching Excellence, professional development workshops designed to help faculty members identify quantitative challenges commonly arising in the context of their courses, and

to help those faculty members construct pedagogical solutions for helping students develop the quantitative skills necessary for mastering these challenges.

In the fall two workshop groups met. Participants were from the departments of Biology and Medical Lab Technology, Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Education and Reading, Nursing and Allied Health, and Social Sciences. Presentations included:

- Interpreting tables and charts from the National Assessment of Educational Progress
- Calculating atomic mass
- Calculating of the cost of one aluminum atom
- Performing calculations related to the kinetic molecular theory of molecules in the gas phase
- Estimating the date of conception in a pregnancy, the weight of the fetus, and the date of delivery
- Calculating proper doses of pharmaceuticals, converting pounds to kilograms, etc.

- Calculating radiation dosages in pelvic imaging
- Figuring the genetic characteristics of offspring, given the genes of the parents, using Punnett squares
- Calculating cardiac output, given the heart rate and stroke volume
- Understanding human breathing via the relationships among air flow, pressure, and volume
- Understanding the reasons for an airline crash by making fuel volume calculations

Our workshop participants got outstanding assistance with understanding the nature of students' computational difficulties from two members of the Mathematics and Computer Science Department. (Incidentally,

when we talk about student difficulties here, we're not describing problems in higher mathematics. We're talking arithmetic: fractions, decimals, the calculation of percentage change, etc. And among other exciting and occasionally appalling revelations in the workshops, we learned to our dismay that at least some elementary schools have stopped teaching the multiplication tables. So we abandon English grammar, then the multiplication tables, and what's next—the alphabet? If you have icons and pictures on your cell phone and your laptop and your iPod and your Blackberry, do you really have to know what those funny little squiggles mean? But we digress . . .)



In the spring semester now underway, the workshop participants will take the teaching modules they developed in the fall semester and use them in specific courses—again with assistance from our resident mathematicians. Next fall we plan to expand the scope of the workshops to include faculty members from all disciplines. (We were limited this year by the fact that our activity was funded by a New York State Perkins Grant, which stipulates that participants be from courses or departments involved in occupational programs.) The mandate from the Chancellor's office calls for an across-the-curriculum program.



Our kickoff semester was exhilarating. The presentations were exciting, provocative, and occasionally brilliant, discussions were lively and informative, and the two-hour sessions always ended with participants still having much to say. We are eager to see how the program evolves. Stay tuned.

FRESHMAN LEARNING COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

By Dr. Harriet Shenkman



Our Freshman Learning Community at BCC is an intentional restructuring of student and faculty time to build community. We seek to foster more explicit connections between students, between students and faculty, between faculty and counselors, and between developmental learning and academic disciplines.

We work in clusters consisting of a developmental course in Mathematics, English, or Reading, an academic discipline, and a college orientation course. Faculty collaborate, meeting weekly to focus upon student needs, to integrate curricula, and to develop common themes. Basic skills are applied directly to an academic discipline and counseling is focused on classroom needs and faculty input. During the semester, students work toward creating thematic projects which they will present to an audience of peers at a final showcase. The goal is to make student learning transparent, and, in doing so, strengthen student self-efficacy.

The learning community program offers added resources, including individual peer tutoring, coaching in the use of technology to enhance presentation skills, smaller class size in academic disciplines, reassigned time for faculty, and social opportunities for students. Developmental skills faculty, academic discipline faculty, and college counselors establish a sense of common purpose. Most important, students feel special and supported in their peer group and there is an increased sense of identity, cohesion, and connection with the college.

Faculty and Counselor Participants 2007-2008

Neal Phillip (Environmental Science);
 Victor Rodriguez (Counseling);
 Elizabeth Smith (English);
 Georgene Osborne (Reading);
 Roman Kossak (Mathematics);
 Vaso Thomas (Social Science);
 Eldiane Elmeus (Counseling);
 Jordi Getman (History);
 Nelson Reynoso (Counseling);
 Grace Cukras (Reading);
 Ted Ingram (Counseling);
 Maria Treglia (ESL);
 Karla Morales (Counseling);
 Sharon Persinger (Mathematics);
 Vrunda Prabhu (Mathematics);
 Donna Kessler-Eng (English);
 Gilbert Marzan (Social Science);
 Veronie Lawrence-Wright (Counseling)



Creating Student Success One Cluster At A Time !

