

Abstracts of Papers from 2001 National Teaching Forum

Keynote Address – AUTC Visiting Scholar

Dr Gary Poole, AUTC Visiting Scholar, *Director, Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth, University of British Columbia*

Disseminating Best Practice

To share best practice we must first have some amount of agreement regarding just what constitutes best practice. We must be careful to keep our definitions broad so as to encourage a wide range of teaching approaches. Yet, at the same time, things like learning objects repositories should be peer reviewed, so we need criteria for excellence and these criteria could narrow our views regarding acceptable teaching practice.

The dissemination of best practice faces numerous challenges. Traditional workshops can build communities and allow for in-depth explorations of best practice, but they tend to attract a somewhat restricted audience - an institution's best teachers, as a rule. Online workshops share this problem. Web-based repositories can exponentially increase access to the resources associated with best practice; however, they must overcome the "out of sight, out of mind" problem, as well as concerns about how these resources will actually be used.

This brings us to our final issue - the use of that which is being disseminated. Parker Palmer and others have spoken of the need for a kind of "goodness of fit" between practice and personality. We cannot expect people to simply adopt new practice without some level of translation - translation to fit their own styles and context.

Finalists for the Australian Awards for University Teaching

Dr Amanda Barnard, *The University of Western Australia*
Teaching and Learning in Context.

Best practice teaching is that which produces better student learning outcomes, and comes about when students are actively engaged in their learning, and problem solving. Best teaching practice doesn't occur in isolation for either students or teachers. In this presentation I will outline a communication skills course and its practical application in an innovative rural week program for first year medical students at UWA. After a brief communication skills course based on small group work and reflection, all students spend a week in a country town, talking to up to 50 new people about health and community issues. The students, only six weeks into their course, used this experience to reflect and problem solve many of the important issues and difficulties in doctor -patient communication. Just as the students worked collaboratively, so too the teachers of the course jointly engaged in active reflection and problem solving to enhance the course.

Dr Duane Varan, *Murdoch University*

Dr. Varan's approach to teaching centres on his attempts to cultivate an environment conducive to releasing the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness. In this presentation, Dr. Varan will highlight key elements central to these ambitions. He will share from his experiences of collaborating with commercial partners in the nascent interactive television industry illustrating how this approach both shapes industry practice and contributes significantly to better contextualising student learning. He will illustrate a variety of innovative

approaches to pedagogy, such as restructuring the 13 week semester, to demonstrate how stepping outside the box can better serve central teaching objectives. Finally, he will challenge the audience to join with him in reflecting on how our own approaches to teaching often inhibit effective learning; exploring, for example, the tensions between promoting excellence, on the one hand, and creating a culture of collaboration on the other.

Associate Professor Gail Jones, *The University of Western Australia*
Metaphoricity and Provocation

Taking as its starting point Ralph Waldo Emerson's recommendation that pedagogy is about "provocation" rather than "instruction", this paper considers the role of metaphor in the construction of provocative teaching and learning practices. The metaphor of the bridge is employed to ruminate on the various spaces of intellectual engagement, spaces of suspension, connection, communication and monumentality; moreover it offers a self-reflexive device to consider the ways in which our conceptual frameworks predispose or prepossess creative thinking and scholarly arousal. This paper concludes by proposing - very modestly - the idea of a metaphorical ethics: if our working metaphors as teachers implicate us in the community of learning in particular ways, then we have an obligation circumspectly to assess how our critical discourses might operate to include or exclude, empower or disempower, enable or disable, those whom we seek to provoke.

The Kingsford Legal Team, *The University of New South Wales*

Teaching law through clinical legal education requires the teacher to become involved in a delicate balancing act . There are at least 3 people involved in the educational process- the student, the lecturer and the client . The teacher has a duty to provide the student with the best possible educational experience and a duty to the disadvantaged client, who may be in a crisis situation, to provide the highest quality legal assistance.

This method of teaching requires the lecturer to hand over responsibility to the student for the client's problem while remaining at their side figuratively and sometimes literally to encourage, support , analyse and discuss the issues as they arise. Outside lectures and morning tutorials, teachers are not teaching in a controlled environment. Anything can happen and usually does. Teachers work with the situations that arise to assist students develop their thinking not only on the law and legal procedure but on issues of social justice, lawyer client relationships and other ethical issues.

Dr Vishy Karri, *School of Engineering, The University of Tasmania, Hobart*

Five Challenges Facing Teaching Best Practice in Engineering

Modern academia is facing new hurdles in the form of reduced contact hours, increased student-staff ratios and a new generation of international students in large numbers. From engineering point of view, the curriculum undergoes constant reshuffle to incorporate state of the art industry practice. The traditional approach to engineering teaching is re-addressed with an emphasis on industry contacts and encouraging academics to keep up with the industry 'know how'. While increasing number of overseas students are fundamentally challenging our teaching and delivery methods; there is more pressure to disseminate generic skills to such varied student groups. In this paper five such specific challenges, from the author's point of view, facing engineering teaching methods are discussed.

Professor William Tow, *The University of Queensland*

Teaching international relations (IR) constitutes a major challenge in a rapidly changing world. This challenge has been met at the University of Queensland by the adoption of diverse pedagogies, including case study teaching, the organisation of special seminars and lectures featuring key IR analysts policy practitioners. IR theory is integrated whenever possible with practical policy analysis. The objective is to ensure that our students are inspired to play a meaningful part in shaping the international environment and are trained to assume such a role with competence and self-confidence.

Associate Professor Peter G Swann, *School of Optometry, Queensland University of Technology*

This presentation will review the evolution of my teaching style and approach to student learning over 31 years at QUT. The session will describe my teaching context, indicate the challenges I have encountered and the strategies I have developed to resolve these challenges. I have found that interaction in the classroom is a useful means of providing progressive feedback to students on the development of their clinical skills. Students, both Australian and International, participate enthusiastically when they understand that their contributions will be respected and valued. I will demonstrate the interactive teaching style I use with my students, and the marriage of lecture room versus clinical experiences will be detailed.

Professor Iain Hay, *School of Geography, Population and Environmental Management, Flinders University* - Letter to a new university teacher

"Well, there's not too much here is there Tom. After twenty-odd years in a range of teaching roles in three different countries, I find it both perplexing and comforting that I can more or less sum up some of my key insights on good teaching in the three words, engagement, enthusiasm, and organisation. In some ways I would have thought there was more. I guess there is. There's a whole range of specific, day-to-day practices that might be attached to these notions but I do think that if you keep these three principles close to your heart and look for ways of bringing them to life in your classes and in other professional relationships with students, you'll find success in university teaching."

Dr Michelle Hyde, *Faculty of Veterinary Science, The University of Sydney*

Good teaching is teaching that encourages quality student learning – that is, stimulates deeper approaches to learning. Good teaching has many facets – it is motivational, encouraging, relevant and evidence based. Most of all it is student centered – it takes as its starting point what students already know, what students expect and want to learn and considers how best a teacher can help this learning.

My role is that of a learning facilitator where I guide and encourage learning by providing the basic tools and stimulating and motivating students to use, develop and extend these tools. These tools include a strong and up to date body of knowledge in the discipline area, effective oral and written communication skills, critical independent thinking and problem solving skills and the very important skill of self evaluation. I believe that it is important to stress 'key concepts' rather than fact memorisation, and to communicate to students that it is possible, and indeed desirable, to gain an understanding of a topic such that it is never lost and does not have to be 'crammed' the night before an exam. This type of deep approach to learning means that students are able to apply theory to practice in familiar and unfamiliar situations.

The motivational and encouraging aspects of teaching are particularly relevant. In order to learn, students must want to learn – they must be enthusiastic and motivated. I believe the key to engendering student motivation and enthusiasm – and deep approaches to learning – is a teacher:student relationship that is characterised by mutual trust, respect and empathy.

Professor Stephen Gray, *The University of Queensland*

The concept of flexible delivery and the use of technology in courses is being adopted at different rates across universities and faculties throughout Australia. This change in the way we might teach is being embraced by some and shunned by others. This talk will focus on the use of an interactive CD ROM that has been designed for use in introductory to advanced finance courses. Issues addressed will include how this is incorporated into the course, and how this has resulted in a deviation from the traditional two-hour lecture. The CD provides a source of basic content for the students, so this allows the instructor to use the face-to-face lecture time to discuss how the content is applied in practice. That is, the CD does not replace the lecturer, it simply allows the lecturer to do more interesting and valuable things during the available class time. There will also be some discussion about how we use the class time and how students have reacted to this (both positive and negative aspects).

Cristina Poyatos Matas, *School of Languages and Linguistics, Griffith University*

Teaching and learning are the two sides of the same educational coin. We cannot identify best teaching practices without taking into consideration how students learn best. This presentation provides ten keys for best teaching practices based on what students has reported as promoting best learning practices. These are classroom communication, the creation of a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students, the use of real life learning experiences, the promotion of critical thinking, the handing of teacher power to students, the use of intercultural learning experiences, the provision of constructive and recyclable feedback on students' work, the encouragement of student reflection, the use of teacher reflection on teaching and learning, and the sharing of knowledge acquired on teaching. This presentation explores the doors that these keys open to learners taking into account feedback received from students and colleagues.

Sally Kift, *Queensland University of Technology, Law and Legal Studies*

A rich university experience should promote intellectual breadth, agility and curiosity. It should also be an illuminated journey of character and disposition that students embrace for its relevance to their professional and personal circumstances. It must offer more than students could achieve for themselves if all we provided was four years in a dark room with some books and a torch.

As a first year teacher in a professional discipline, what I endeavour to bring to the tertiary experience is a modelled ethic of care that humanizes students' engagement with learning and a desire to make the transition to university easier (rather than harder). Holistically, I aim to make explicit the connection between professional responsibility, personal responsibility, and social responsibility or "citizenry".

By placing law in the live context of contemporary events, by challenging students to be the best practitioners they can be in all aspects (not just the technical), and by choosing to demonstrate a personal (as well as professional) value framework, I hope my students will graduate, not just with a collection of lacklustre notes written by torchlight, but as socially responsible, reflective practitioners who will shine in whatever role they choose to take on.

Ms Marina Lommers, *Curtin University of Technology*

Integrated & Student-Centred Learning: Reconciliation through Furniture and Culture

By consistently taking on new challenges over a design career spanning 25 years, I have come full circle, moving from design student, to fledgling designer, to Managing Director

Design and now-design educator. At each point in the circle I grew, and I have integrated my experience through reflective practice to facilitate student-centred learning.

My transition into teaching has been successful. Early in my career I recognised my ability to see the overview. My capability to distinguish individuals' ability is one of my strengths. I learned to bring together and seek opinions and knowledge from people who I considered experienced or astute in an area. I find this skill vital to aid students to value and develop their individual strengths and interests, and self-direct their education.

My presentation will illustrate one example (Reconciliation through furniture and culture) of how I apply this ability to tap into students' individual interests and integrate their learning across a number of subject areas : design, materials, construction, Aboriginal culture, writing, research and publication. I will discuss the processes I use, and resulting teamwork and synergy. Included are reflections from students' and staff of the resulting work. Subsequent publications/ exhibitions illustrate how learning was integrated beyond the classroom into tangible public venues for reflection.

Dr Deirdre Russell-Bowie, *University of Western Sydney*

Do your students come to your first class full of confidence, knowledge and excited to start learning in this new subject? If so, you are very fortunate! For many lecturers, their students may be apprehensive, lacking appropriate skills and knowledge and only there because they have to be. How can we turn around their negative attitudes, give them positive and inspiring experiences and empower them to confidently pass on their newly learned skills to others? In this brief presentation, Dr Deirdre Russell-Bowie will share seven key factors that have worked for her as she changes student teachers' attitudes, develops their confidence, skills and knowledge and inspires them to be more involved in Creative Arts education in the primary school.

Reports on AUTC and CUTSD projects

The Assessing Student Learning Project: Examining issues and good practice in Australian universities - *Associate Professor Richard James and Professor Craig McInnis*

Enhancing assessment policies and practices is central to improving teaching and learning. The AUTC Assessing Student Learning Project is examining contemporary issues and good practice in student assessment with the objective of preparing a new set of practical resources to assist Australian universities in enhancing their assessment policies and practices. In particular, the project team is looking at online assessment, assessment of group activities and assessment for large classes, as well as the steps being taken to minimise plagiarism. The presentation will focus on:

1. the argument for re-considering assessment practices as part of an overall strategy for improving teaching and learning;

2. some of the findings from fieldwork conducted in 2001; and
3. the preliminary model for the resources under development for release in 2002.

Opportunities for scaffolding higher order skills with online learning and online assessment- *Dr Susan Shannon, Mr Ian Roberts, School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture & Urban Design, Adelaide University*

The two CUTSD Projects 'Reflective Making: Higher-Order Learning in Early Tertiary Architectural Education' and 'The Promotion of Competence and Confidence in Form-making amongst Beginning Built Environment Students' provided an opportunity to develop a large number of high quality digital games. Starting from the premise that a playful approach encourages active learning and the achievement of higher order skills, this paper addresses the engagement of our students with digital learning objects developed in the form of games. With productive reflection-in-action identified as an essential attribute of our graduates, as well as a valuable component of their learning process, we describe approaches taken to model and guide this form of critical thought. Online tools, including an assessment tool, developed or adopted by our university have been enlisted to scaffold the development higher order skills.

Teaching Large Classes - *Ms Denise Chalmers, Professor Ron Weber, Dr Debra Herbert, The University of Queensland*

The aim of the project was to enhance the quality of the teaching of large classes in Australian universities in an effective and sustainable manner. The project was undertaken in 2 concurrent phases. The first phase involved a comprehensive review of literature and current practices to identify: research findings, national and international developments, practical teaching and management strategies, examples of good practice and emerging issues in large class teaching.

The second phase involved the development and implementation of strategies to disseminate the findings of the review and to share good practices across disciplines and universities. Over 80 highly accomplished teachers of large classes and academic developers from 23 Australian universities were involved in both phases of the project.

This presentation will provide an overview of the project with particular emphasis on the dissemination phase and the resources that have been developed to support teachers of large classes.

Collaborative peer group teaching in large classes – a new approach which enhances the student experience - *Assoc Professor Marian Dobos PhD and Dr Baden Rumble, School of Medical Sciences, RMIT University*

Project team: Marian Dobos, Susan Grinpukel, Buzz Rumble & Carmel McNaught

University teaching of biochemistry has traditionally been based on delivery of the curriculum in lectures and practical classes. We have designed and implemented a new teaching and learning program for the second year biochemistry curriculum, currently involving a class of 130 students. In this program, student-centred learning activities in Peer Groups form a central element of the teaching. Structured discussions, concept mapping and problem-solving exercises are performed in Peer Groups managed by the students. These activities enable the students to become active learners and share their understanding of biochemistry, in an alternative setting. Additional sharing of ideas occurs through student-generated materials, WebBoard discussions and seminars. The Peer Group program enables the students to adopt new approaches to learning,

achieve greater cognitive engagement with the subject, and enhance their communication and teamwork skills.

Strategies for Marking in Large Groups - *Dr Angus Morrison-Saunders, Dr Sharon Delmege, Murdoch University*

This presentation will be divided into two parts. The first part will report on a CUTSD project which tried three approaches to using peer review for marking reports in a large class. The objectives of peer review were to improve student learning and writing skills through a review process and, in one trial, to also develop team work skills and reduce marking load for staff.

The second part will report on a project to improve academic writing skills. The first stage of the project involved a survey of 200 students in all divisions within the university to determine: where students established their writing habits; what students see as areas of concern; how aware students are of avenues for help; what they have found useful/not useful; how they feel about instructions and feedback they receive; and what motivates them to improve writing skills. The survey results will provide staff with feedback that can be used to improve teaching practices throughout the university.

Student Peer and Self Assessment: Improving instruments for reliability and learning reinforcement' – Peer and Self-Assessment Software Program

Dr. Burton and Associate Professor O'Toole developed the PASS Program with funding from a National Teaching Grant. The program is used by students to provide their lecturers with both formative and summative evaluations of their work. This form of assessment is particularly valuable in group-centred, participatory project work where students work cooperatively and independently of the lecturer. The program provides essential data on the work and achievements of students, which is not otherwise accessible to the lecturer.

Data gathered by peer and self-assessment informs the lecturer's own perceptions and judgements on student achievement, whilst providing students with detailed feedback from their peers and giving them the opportunity to reflect on their contributions to particular projects.

The PASS software consists of four modules, Self Assessment, Peer Assessment, Course Assessment and Tutor Assessment. Students complete the first three modules and the lecturer then uses their input to complete the tutor assessments. Students are then able to access their tutor assessments and the anonymous assessments of them made by other students.

Using this form of Peer and Self Assessment is a particularly effective way of reinforcing the learning that occurs in complex, multi-layered, cooperative, experiential activities.

The Assessment of Learning: Accommodating Students with a Disability
- Associate Professor Carolyn Webb, University of Western Sydney

This project, a CUTSD-funded staff development project, commenced at the University of Western Sydney in 2000. The major objective of the project was to improve the processes involved in the assessment of students with a disability through providing opportunities for enhanced understanding on the part of academic staff concerning good practice in assessment generally, but particularly applied to when and how alternative accommodations in assessment can be made for students with a disability. The suite of staff development resources and processes developed through the project included networks of interested staff,

newsletters, workshops, trials of alternative assessment methods, and a resource-rich website.

Information and Communication Technologies and Their Role Flexible Learning - *Ron Oliver, Edith Cowan University. Dr John Hedberg and Professor Sandra Wills, University of Wollongong.*

The AUTC Project, Information and Communication Technologies and Their Role in Flexible Learning, is being undertaken by a team of researchers from the University of Wollongong and Edith Cowan University, comprised of Professors Barry Harper, Ron Oliver, John Hedberg and Sandra Wills. The project is looking to investigate and explore the learning designs inherent in effective technology-based learning settings in higher education. The intention of the project is to develop a means to identify and extract effective learning designs from their original contexts and to explore their potential for redevelopment in other disciplines and knowledge domains.

The project has designed and developed an Evaluation and Redevelopment Framework which is currently being implemented by a large team of technology-based learning evaluators across a large number of learning settings and in a number of institutions. When this stage of the process is complete, the project will look to build generic shells and templates for those settings which have the potential for redevelopment. In future stages of the project, the Team will be designing and building learning design shells which teachers will be able which teachers will be able to use to implement innovative and effective online and technology-based learning designs in their own teaching.

This presentation will discuss the background to the project and the processes being employed. It will describe the Evaluation and Redevelopment Framework that has been developed and will present examples of the outcomes of its implementation to discover learning designs suitable for redevelopment. The presentation will describe the planned future stages of the project and discuss issues which may arise.