

Advocate

They're Talking on Campus...

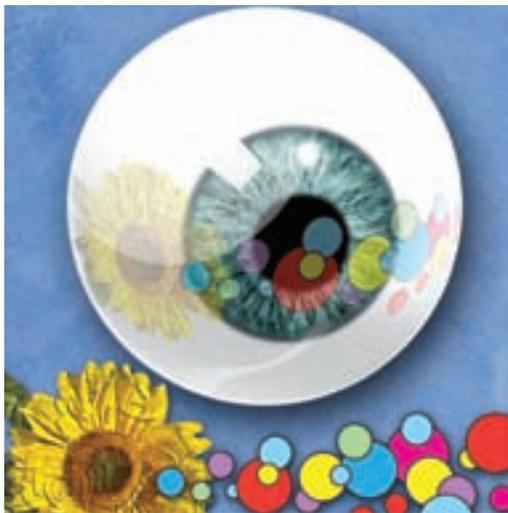
... ABOUT BUDGET CUTS TO PUBLIC universities, such as at the State University of New York (SUNY), and the California system of public higher education, "... a vital resource that must be funded and cannot sustain further cuts," said California Faculty Association President Lillian Taiz, in response to the governor's budget proposal for the 2010-11 fiscal year. The plan seeks to close California's \$19.9 billion budget gap through a series of spending cuts and tax maneuvers. The California State University (CSU) portion of the plan includes the restoration of \$305 million.

In New York, the governor's proposed budget for 2010-11 would cut SUNY's operating budget by \$118 million. Combined with \$410 million in budget reductions during the past two years, SUNY would be losing more than half a billion dollars in state support. United University Professions President Phillip Smith is urging state lawmakers to reject the cut to SUNY.

... ABOUT A DRAMATIC GROWTH IN male enrollment in community colleges across the country, with many institutions reporting that 2009 male enrollment rates increased as much as 35 percent from 2008. While female students still outpace the number of male students attending community colleges, the American Associate of Community Colleges reports that with the overall growth in enrollment, the increase of male students is slightly higher, closing the gap between the female and male student population. Community college administrators attribute this growth to recent job losses and the new GI Bill.

When Images Rule

One of the most powerful, yet surprisingly overlooked tools for teaching and learning, is the use of everyday images. Cutting-edge scholarship should include visual representations of data and meaning, say the authors of



this issue's *Thriving in Academe*. Images shape our world. Visuals that confront us on screen, page, and every other space carry immense cultural, political, and intellectual weight.

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NEA'S HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

"Advancing Higher Ed in Unpredictable Times" is our theme.

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CENSUS BUREAU COMES TO CAMPUS

Hard-to-count students are vital to future funding for academics.

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BUILDING CAMPUS COALITIONS

Diverse campus groups should unite around common goals.

On the Road

WITH VALERIE WILK

IN DECEMBER, I TRAVELED TO SUBURBAN Boston to participate in the first statewide higher ed conference of the Massachusetts Teachers Association in almost 20 years. MTA President Anne Wass detailed MTA's activism, including support for pension reform to allow faculty to move into the state defined-benefit pension plan from the defined-contribution option. She also discussed a lawsuit to secure health care coverage for part-time faculty at community and state colleges and the University of Massachusetts. Jim Rice, MTA member and president of NEA's National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), spoke to conferees about NCHE challenges and accomplishments, including securing additional resources for NEA's higher education program.

In his keynote, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel highlighted NEA's advocacy with Congress and the Obama Administration on health care, pension, and education. He outlined the importance of the 2010 elections for K-12 as well as higher education employees, and urged conferees to stay involved in the political process.

I conducted a workshop about living wage campaigns with Donna Johnson, MTA Higher Education Leadership Council chair, and University Staff Association (ESP) local at University of Mass.-Amherst) president.

To me, the most exciting thing about the conference was the wide range of MTA members in attendance, from veteran leaders to those attending their first statewide conference.

—Valerie Wilk coordinates NEA's higher education activities

ACTIONLINE NEA

Managing in Unpredictable Times

NEA's higher education conference in March will focus on the extraordinary changes affecting our nation's universities and community colleges.

NEA's 28th annual higher education conference, "Advancing Higher Education in Unpredictable Times," will convene March 26-28. Check www.nea.org/he regarding latest news on venue. Melissa Harris-Lacewell—Princeton University associate professor of politics and African-American studies, award-winning author, and broadcast commentator—will be the keynote speaker. Martha Kanter, Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education, will also address the conference. Kanter oversees policies, programs, and activities related to postsecondary education, vocational and adult education, and federal student aid. The conference is being held jointly with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Online registration forms and hotel reservations are available at www.nea.org/he. The program will be posted online as it is finalized. Early bird registration rates end February 15, while online registration remains open until March 5. Leadership Day is March 25 and is open to NEA and AFT members and affiliate staff from both organizations. Pre-conference activities also include the annual membership meeting of NEA's National Council for Higher Education on Thursday evening (25th) and again on Friday morning.

The 2010 issue of the NEA Almanac of Higher Education will be released at the conference. The *Almanac* features a series of annual articles on higher education funding, faculty salaries, ESP issues, collective bargaining contracts, and faculty

work, as well as articles of particular concern for higher education employees. The *Almanac* is distributed to NEA higher education locals and leaders, and is available for conferences and to libraries. If you are interested in obtaining copies for your meeting, please email HigherEd@nea.org for details.

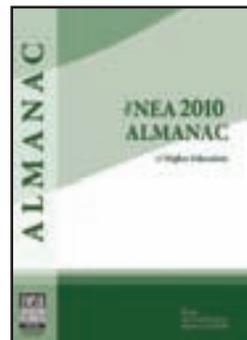
Thought & Action, The NEA Higher Education Journal, invites submissions for "Radical Transformations," the 2010 Special Focus section.

The term "radical transformation" is a two-edged sword. On one hand, higher education has been buffeted over the past few decades by a series of transformations, such as changes in how public higher education is financed, changes in employment characteristics of faculty, proliferation of online approaches to instruction, and more.

On the other hand, the term "radical" has meaning in the political sense—as in the need for innate transformations to create a more just, equitable, and democratic world.

Is higher education at a crossroads? Have we had enough of administrators, pundits, and politicians setting the agenda for higher education? What should be the role of intellectuals and scholarship in creating the future?

To answer these questions we are soliciting articles on a variety of topics. Send an email to pubint3@nea.org for author guidelines or visit www.nea.org/home/33303.htm.



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IN THE KNOW

Count Us In!

As the 2010 census gets underway, faculty, administrators, and other campus leaders should do everything possible to engage one of our nation's most elusive census groups: College students.

Colleges and universities have much to gain from an accurate count of this year's census. Every ten years, the government uses the results of the census to not only distribute federal aid (\$400 billion this time around) and seats in the House of Representatives, but also to determine levels of college tuition grant and loan programs. Census data also informs agencies regarding support levels for faculty, student, and librarian research, and about funding for services in academic communities, like transportation, public safety, medical care, and road repairs. For college towns of all sizes to receive fair and sufficient funding, higher ed students must fill out their census forms from where they live most of the year: Campus.

"It's important for students to have adequate services in the community where they live, work, shop, and eat nine months out of the year," says Laura Waldon, a partnership specialist with the U.S. Census Bureau. "Faculty members should also want to see that money coming back into the community where they work."

Parents are instructed to omit students from their forms, even if they return to live at home after they leave college. "Otherwise, students will be counted twice," Waldon says.

Census questionnaires are being delivered or mailed to residential addresses this month

and next. Individual questionnaires will be delivered to on-campus housing in April and May. Census takers will coordinate with residence life and housing staff to distribute and collect the questionnaires.

Your partnership as a campus leader sends a strong message to your community about the importance of the census and the benefits of being counted. The 2010 questionnaire is one of the shortest in history and takes about 10 minutes to complete. By partnering with the Census Bureau, NEA members and others faculty can help by:

- Assuring people that it is safe to answer the 2010 census. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share questionnaire responses with anyone, including other governmental agencies, courts, and law enforcement entities.
- Posting 2010 census messages on campus marquees, at events, and in campus lobbies.
- Planning awareness and visibility events during Census on Campus Week in March.
- Hosting a census information table at fairs, festivals, orientations, and sporting events.
- Including census information in class discussions, Blackboard pages, Web sites, blogs, Facebook pages, email announcements, and college or university newsletters and newspapers. There's more information at www.2010.census.gov/campus.

From Capitol to Campus**CONGRESS BEGAN 2010 IN HIGH**

gear, particularly with health care reform and economic recovery legislation. Consideration of these bills was expected to be completed by this month. Waiting in the wings is the Senate's version of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA), which passed the House last fall and converts federal student loans into direct loans from the federal government, bypassing banks and using the savings to increase Pell grants and key funds for community colleges through the President's proposed "American Graduation Initiative." The next big push involves the Jobs for Main Street Act of 2010. The bill provides \$154 billion overall to retain and create jobs as well as to extend unemployment insurance and other "safety net" programs. The proposal includes a pool of funds for construction projects (\$48 billion) that could create opportunities for higher education. But more directly focused on education is the \$23 billion Education Jobs Fund.

NEA is advocating for an education jobs fund to maintain the investment in public education and save and create jobs during 2010 and 2011, as well as an infrastructure investment consisting of a dedicated funding stream for school construction and modernization, including projects at public two- and four-year institutions of higher education. To these ends, a House bill passed with funding for both priorities.

The House version of the education jobs fund—modeled as NEA requested—includes no wait time to draw up contracts or acquire materials. The Senate anticipates action on its version of the bill this month. See more at www.nea.org.

FLASH POINTS**CENSUS ON CAMPUS**

February–March: Questionnaires are mailed or delivered to residential addresses.

March: Census on Campus Week, which varies from campus to campus.

April 1: Census Day, when questionnaire responses should represent every household in the nation as each dwelling exists on this day.

April–May: Individual questionnaires are delivered to on-campus housing for students to complete.

May–July: Census-takers visit households that did not return a questionnaire by mail.

December: Census Bureau delivers population counts to the White House.

March 2011: Census Bureau completes delivery of redistricting data to states.

Organizing

Ohio Education Association higher education leaders Steve Doster and Patrick McLaughlin recently testified before the Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee in support of H.B. 365, a bill that would allow more than 13,000 part-time Ohio faculty—adjuncts and graduate assistants at public institutions of higher education—to have the same collective bargaining rights as full-time faculty. Currently, part-time faculty are exempted from “public employee” status under Ohio’s collective bargaining law.

Doster, chair of OEA’s Higher Education Advisory Council and a professor of accounting and management at Shawnee State University, highlighted the challenges facing contingent faculty: low pay, no offices, and exclusion from organizational participation. He stated, “I believe that allowing my part-time colleagues to organize will significantly support the success of The Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2008–2017, including gains in retention and high quality degree programs.”

H.B. 365 is the companion bill to S.B. 129, already introduced and supported by OEA.

Campus Activities

A Vermont labor-oriented conference inspired hundreds of students, workers, and other activists to attend a day-long labor summit at the University of Vermont. “They were inspired and energized by the opportunities that come from struggle,” according to comments posted at the Vermont-NEA Web site. Participants discussed how to engage members, strengthen unions, and work toward fair pay and benefits.

MEA-MFT faculty members now have local faculty unions at all 14 units of the Montana University System (MUS), with the recent addition of faculty at Montana State University-Bozeman. Faculty members in these unions communicate through the Coalition of Union Faculty (formerly called the Council of Faculty Organizations). Members from nearly all 14 unions gathered recently to begin establishing goals, such as organizing the coalition as a fully functioning entity with regular meetings, and avoiding bargaining against one another.

Contracts

United Faculty of Florida (UFF) at the University of Florida (UF) and the UF Board of Trustees signed a new contract after five years of negotiations. It takes effect upon a ratification vote scheduled for the 16th and 17th of this month. “The agreement contains numerous advances over the previous contract and provides for stronger protections of faculty rights as well as improved benefits,” says John Biro, UFF-UF president. “We will have our first locally negotiated contract, one geared to the specific needs and aspirations of the UF faculty.”

The University of Maine System Board of Trustees recently approved a tentative agreement with the Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine (AFUM). The membership had not voted by press-time, though is expected to by this month. AFUM President Ron Mosley, a University of Maine-Machias professor, said the agreement would go to AFUM’s bargaining council and then to members. Mosley is the author of this issue’s “Speaking Out” (page 12).

Two education support professional (ESP) units at Central Community College in Nebraska that were once independent of each other in organizing, elections, and settlements, joined forces and won their first contract last summer for the current school year. The Central Community College Staff Association’s (CCCSA) hourly-unit members received an increase of 3.25 percent of current average annual salary added to the base pay of each employee. Salaried unit members received a 3.5 percent of their current salary lump sum payment, but no base salary increase. The contracts also allow for payroll deduction of dues.

The hourly unit, with 125 members, includes administrative assistants, custodians, maintenance workers, technology staff, financial aid technicians, and others. The salaried unit consists of 30 trainers, counselors, and instructional support staff.

The two units are spread across three CCC campuses and two satellite campuses. The units are now negotiating their second contract.

Increased Enrollment at Community Colleges Presents New Challenges



Maria Neira, New York State United Teachers vice president, discusses new challenges facing community colleges at a recent gathering of NYSUT members. Enrollment at the 30 State University of New York community colleges increased by a record 9.8 percent between 2008 and 2009. Much of the growth resulted from an increase in first-time/full-time (10.8 percent), transfer (21 percent), and continuing (11.8 percent) students.

PHOTO: STEVE JACOBS

Thriving in Academe

Seeing is Believing

Visual Teaching and Learning

BY DEANDRA LITTLE, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
AND PETER FELTEN, ELON UNIVERSITY

“Images are central to our lives, and it is time they become central in our universities.”—*James Elkins*

We live in an image-based world. Visual information fills the screens, pages, and spaces that surround us through the day. Research into human learning demonstrates the power of these visuals in shaping our understanding of the world. Not only do people process images more quickly than text, we tend to rely on our visual experience even when it contradicts our conceptual knowledge of a topic (Hoffman 1998). As the saying goes, “seeing is believing.”

Step into most classrooms, however, and you enter a different world. We might illustrate our PowerPoint slides with a few pictures or the occasional graph, but the work that students and faculty do together rarely



MEET DEANDRA LITTLE AND PETER FELTEN

Deandra Little and **Peter Felten** have presented on visual literacy at national conferences and facilitated, with Chad Berry (Berea College), “Learning to Look,” a teaching seminar for faculty from text-based humanities disciplines. When not working together, Deandra is assistant director at the University of Virginia’s Teaching Resource Center and teaches American literature; Peter directs the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, and is an associate professor of history at Elon University. Deandra can be reached at dlittle@virginia.edu and Peter at pfelten@elon.edu.

takes visual information seriously. As Carmen Luke has written, the classroom is the only place where today’s students are not “blending, mixing, and matching knowledge drawn from diverse textual sources and communication media.”

We have an obligation to help students make sense of the complex images that shape our world. Today’s visuals are more than just entertaining eye-candy; in many academic disciplines, cutting-edge scholarship includes visual representations of data and meaning.

Images—everything from traditional art to innovative motion charts—are powerful tools for teaching and learning that should be infused deeply into the curriculum.

Tales from Real Life

SEEING IT DIFFERENTLY:
DIGITAL STORYTELLING

MY CAPSTONE HISTORY RESEARCH seminar traditionally ended with student trios presenting a synthesis of their individual research papers. All too often, these presentations failed to capture either the insights or the excitement students found in their research.

Frustrated, I experimented with a new multimedia format, using simple technologies (such as PowerPoint or iMovie) and inspired by materials from the Center for Digital Storytelling. The new small group assignment required students to combine an essay with images and sound (including their own voices) to make a 3–5 minute video story that integrated their individual research papers.

This digital storytelling assignment transformed student learning. Not only did students identify important and creative connections between their individual research projects to tell meaningful stories, but their thoughts about their work in the course also changed. When we viewed digital stories in class, students engaged in vigorous and thoughtful discussion, and many asked if they could have copies of each others’ projects (something that never happened with traditional presentations and papers). Students even invited friends, parents, and other faculty to class when digital stories would be shown. Instead of viewing projects as something only their professor would care about, they wanted to share their digital stories and research more broadly. Integrating images and sound into their work allowed them to see historical research and analysis in a new way—as part of an on-going, public conversation, not just something confined to the class.

—*Deandra Little, University of Virginia
and Peter Felten, Elon University*

Learning to Look

“People learn more than half of what they know from visual information, but few schools have an explicit curriculum to show students . . . about visual data.” —*Mary Alice White*

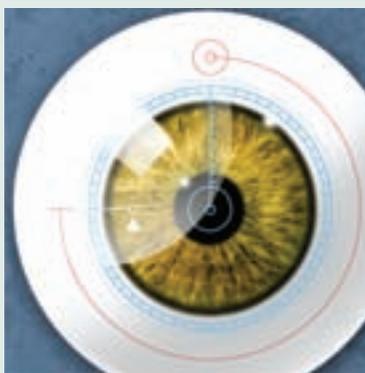
If you talk with faculty about how students have changed over the past decade or two, one frequent theme you’ll hear is how visually oriented students are now. That should not surprise anyone. Today’s culture leans increasingly on images and multi-media composition for both entertainment and information. Even online newspapers, for instance, supplement their articles with image galleries and videos.

We are not advocating a shift to a visual-only curriculum, nor are we suggesting that images are the only way meaning is made in the contemporary world. Instead, we believe that educators must take images seriously as one of the central ways people learn about the world and represent their understanding of it.

As teachers, we need to help students make sense of visual information in our disciplines. Although some visual literacy skills develop automatically over a lifetime of contact with images, the ones students develop out of habit tend to emphasize lower-order thinking skills. Research shows that true proficiency or higher-order visual literacy does not develop unless these skills are identified and taught (Ausburn & Ausburn, 1978). Moreover, the continual flood of images surrounding us often lead students to believe that they are proficient visually and to develop superficial habits of examining images. We see this all too often in our courses when students learn that we are showing a film in class: “Oh, so now we don’t have to think.” Students’ visual habits and professors’ visual avoidance combine so that our graduates often remain mindless and passive consumers of images, rather than becoming critical interpreters and producers of them.

Just as we continue to cultivate students’ reading and writing skills, we also need to help our students become proficient at both analyzing and composing with visual forms. Developing such skills and capacities in our students requires us to think in new ways about our teaching and our students’ learning.

A good place to begin is to examine how we use—and how we ask our students to use—visual images in our classes. To focus this examination, we adapted ideas from Katherine Martinez’s (1995) analysis of historians’ “comfort level” with images in their scholar-



ly arguments. Martinez developed a simple, yet powerful, three-level framework that applies equally well to teaching. Considering whether images appear as illustrations, as the means of interpretation, or as illumination in our classes can help us assess whether we are using them just as entertainment or in ways that evoke critical thinking and disciplinary learning.

Images as Illustration

The first category is the most common, but the least likely to enhance student understanding of how images make meaning within our disciplines. We use images as illustrations when we add an image to a slide presentation to provide visual interest, but don’t discuss it or invite students to analyze it. In a class focused on Benjamin Franklin’s writings, for example, I might display a portrait while I lecture or while we discuss passages from his autobiography, without drawing any attention to the image. Similarly, we witness students treating images as illustration when they skip over the graphs while reading an economics textbook, believing that the text alone conveys the real meaning of the book.

Unexamined illustrations expose students to images, but not in a meaningful way. Although this approach gives students something to look at, it doesn’t expand their skills or knowledge of how to think within a discipline, nor does it challenge the pre-

conceptions they might have about how knowledge is represented. To add depth to what students are doing, we need to move beyond using images as a presentation tool to using them as objects of interpretation, argument, and analysis aligned with disciplinary skills.

Images as a Means for Interpretation

When we ask students to engage more deeply with images, we move into the second category—using them as a means for interpretation. This analysis will look different in different disciplines. Using images as a means for interpretation can help students understand that the tools we use to collect pictures of the world (e.g., cameras, MRI scanners) change how we think about the world and each other. Similarly, inviting students to examine the

In a class focused on Benjamin Franklin’s writings, for example, I might display a portrait while I lecture or discuss passages from his autobiography.

images created to describe our experiences in the world (e.g., photographs, YouTube videos, graphs, Web sites) alter their understanding of it.

Visualizations of information both describe and interpret; they frame what we see in particular ways. The Sloan Digital Sky Survey (www.sdss.org), for example, is not only a powerful research tool for astronomers, but also a rich resource of visual data that can change the way students learn astronomy. Instead of giving students text-book-style numerical data to do basic calculations, students could be guided through the process of integrating SDSS visual and numerical data to understand both how and why to do that same astronomical analysis.

When students discuss their observations, inferences, and interpretations, they discover what they missed, and with it, the importance of carefully examining visual images. They then begin to see images are composed with intention and design. This exercise can be especially useful with photographs or visualizations of data, which students often see as inherently “truthful” or unambiguous.

Images as Illumination

In the third category, images become integral to the learning experience; learning would not happen in the same way without them. Martinez describes illumination as using images “to surprise us into new perceptions.”

Images can promote new understanding or deepen engagement with a subject. On the first day of introductory chemistry,

one professor shows students photographs of everyday scenes, including an abandoned house and a bike rider. After asking them “Where is the chemistry?” in each picture, he asks them to list questions about chemical processes the images provoke. This exercise deepens students’ engagement with the subject, foregrounds lines of inquiry they will pursue later in the semester, and primes students to begin thinking like scientists.

Using images as metaphors for difficult concepts or to prompt students’ memory can be another form of illumination. Images can also be used to shift the emotional tenor of a scholarly discussion on an important issue which might easily be abstracted or dehumanized. Because images simultaneously engage thinking and feeling, they can illuminate the real,

human significance of course material.

Images across the Curriculum

Changes in technology are making it easier and easier for us to bring images into our classrooms, but the digital revolution is not necessarily changing how people learn or understand the world. Humans always have used images as a central tool for making meaning. We should teach students to see critically and to compose with visual forms that are appropriate for our disciplines and our image-based world. Doing that will require not only re-envisioning our courses and our curricula, but also supporting faculty in learning to both value and use images in their teaching.

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BEST PRACTICES

Words as Images

As students develop reading and analytical skills in any subject, they must learn how to distinguish key concepts and patterns. This is true in my literature classes, where students sometimes struggle to identify major themes in the reading. I have found that visualizations of texts can help.

Early in the semester, I often create a tag cloud using a free application available at Wordle.net. When I paste the text of, for example, a short story into the application, Wordle generates an image in which the size of a word is proportional to the number of times it appears in a text. Looking at the tag cloud, students can begin analyzing themes and



frequency of word usage. Using other tag cloud software, we can also compare and contrast two texts. After this exercise, my students are

more prepared to read and analyze the text itself.

Students can create tag clouds of their course notes or their essays to assess their own work. One geography colleague has students create tag clouds as a study guide after each unit in his course. Another colleague, in an interdisciplinary course, has students hand in tag clouds of their essays along with a short reflection on what they learned about their own writing from it.

In each of these variations, the tag cloud helps students see patterns and themes, which deepens their understanding of course materials.

References & Resources

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Center for Digital Storytelling:

www.storycenter.org/

Cool Iris: www.cooliris.com

Kaltura: <http://corp.kaltura.com/>

Library of Congress's American

Memory site: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

Periodic Table of Visualization

Methods: www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html

Prezi: www.prezi.com

Spatial Perspectives on Analysis for Curriculum Enhancement (social and environmental science):

www.csiss.org/space

Sprixi (freely licensed images):

www.sprixi.com

Tag Cloud Guide: http://maneyeyes.alphaworks.ibm.com/maneyeyes/page/Tag_Cloud.html

Visualization Motion Chart (displays changes in multiple variables over time): <http://code.google.com/apis/visualization/documentation/gallery/motionchart.html>

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Helping Students See the Bigger Picture

Professors who teach with visuals thoughtfully can deepen student learning.

The right picture is worth a thousand words. Used well, visual images are more than just “icing.” Consider how images help meet your learning goals and objectives: What kind of images does your discipline use to make meaning? Will your students bring to class experience with that type of image, or do you need to teach students the basics of reading that visual form?



It's important to play fair. Wondering how to display and share images in ways that are feasible at your institution and that meet copyright restrictions? Librarians and instructional technologists at your campus can help you navigate Fair Use and multimedia composition. They also can work with you to access visual resources such as ArtStor, a rich database of images that is available by institutional subscription.

To search for relevant visuals on the Web, you might reach beyond generic tools for specialized image search engines like Sprixi and Cool Iris. Many public and discipline-based organizations also have rich image archives, including the Library of Congress's American Memory site and the social and environmental science SPACE site.

For composing with visual or multimedia sources, you and your students could use ubiquitous tools like PowerPoint, Windows Movie Maker, or iMovie. You also might experiment with visual presentation

programs like Prezi, with a Visualization Motion Chart that displays how multiple variables change over time, or with the open source video platform Kaltura.

Learning from images is often not self-evident. What you see isn't necessarily what your students will see. Experts see meaning and patterns quickly, particularly when that expert has spent hours preparing to teach with a visualization.

Students have to learn how to look in disciplined and disciplinary ways. A combination of reading and writing about visual images produces the best results. Analyzing, selecting, and creating visuals develops students' visual communication skills while helping them retain information and make meaning of data in new ways.

Scaffolding assignments helps students develop expertise. Have students practice visual communication skills early in the term with more straightforward images or assignments and progress to more complex ones. Troubleshoot by assessing what they learn along the way. If you are teaching with images across the curriculum, consider how students' interactions with images build from an introductory course to more advanced ones, or how work with images in different disciplines can be complementary. Through exposure to varied, increasingly complex images and thought-provoking discussions of them, students learn how to make meaning of and meaning with visual images.

THRIVING IN ACADEME

Thriving in Academe is a joint project of the National Education Association and the Professional and Organizational Development Network www.podnetwork.org in Higher Education. This section is intended to promote ever more effective teaching and learning in higher education through dialogue among colleagues. The opinions of this feature are solely the authors' and do not reflect the views of either organization. For more information contact the editor, Douglas Reimondo Robertson, (robertson2@nku.edu) at North Kentucky University or John Rosales (jrosales@nea.org) at NEA.

World & Nation

NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, called for U.S. immigration policy and visa reform in their report, "A Visa and Immigration Policy for the Brain-Circulation Era: Adjusting to What Happened in the World While We Were Making Other Plans." It was released in December.

The report urges policy actions in the post-9/11 era that allow for more education exchanges. The Obama Administration "understands that openness to foreign students and foreign talent must be a part of our strategy to get the economy moving" said Victor Johnson, the report's author. "As Congress prepares to take up immigration reform and the Administration focuses on innovation and job creation, we believe it is past time for an in-depth look at how foreign students factor in." For the full report, visit http://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/visa_immigration_for_brain_circulation.pdf.

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education

(AASHE) launched the nation's first sustainability-ranking program for higher education institutions last month. The program, STARS, Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating, allows for both internal evaluation and external comparison for all aspects of sustainability on campus. Currently, 121 institutions participate in the program, which is open to any college or university located in the United States or Canada. For more information visit www.aashe.org/stars.

More Americans are receiving associate degrees and other sub-baccalaureate certificates than have received bachelor's degrees over the past decade, according to a report released by the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

The number of associate degrees and certificates awarded by institutions that offer financial aid rose significantly from 2002 to 2007 at a 25 percent increase, while the rate of increase for bachelor's degrees was only 18 percent during those years.

Faculty & Staff

Labor Secretary Hilda Solis is promoting rules requiring employers such as university and community college administrators and trustees to increase disclosure to workers on how their pay is computed, and about their dealings with consultants who advise on how to deal with workplace unions or unionization attempts.

Currently, employers are not required to report advice they receive from consultants. The rule falls under the 1959 Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act. The Labor Department stated this exception should be narrowed to allow employees a more transparent view into what employers are doing in response to union matters.

Deputy Labor Secretary Seth Harris said to the media, "The agency is going to explore that exception and try to more accurately define what 'advice' means," with the overall goal of creating more openness and transparency in the workplace and giving more power to workers and unions.

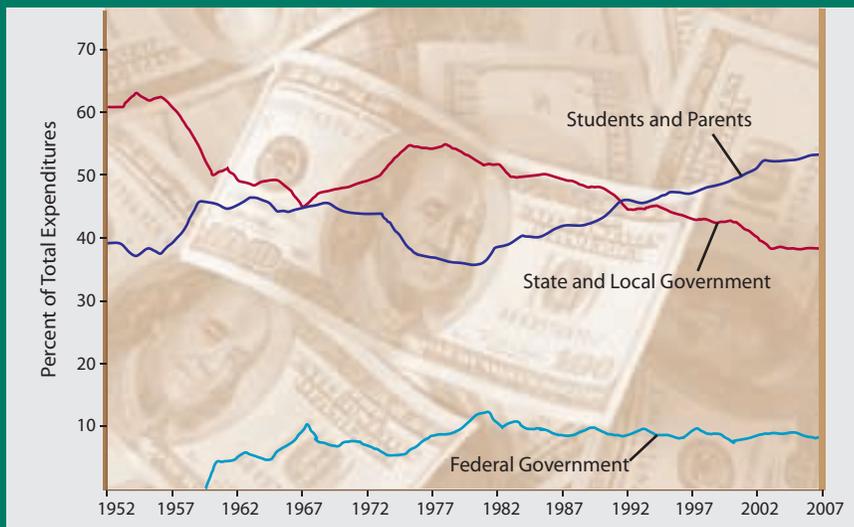
Professional News

The number of available faculty jobs has reached an historic low according to reports from the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Historical Association (AHA), and the American Economic Association. Each of the associations saw a dramatic drop in job availability in their respective disciplines in 2008-09.

The MLA saw a 51 percent decline in available English positions in the last two years, the largest ever recorded by the MLA. The AHA reported that the number of faculty jobs listed fell 23.8 percent, which does not include the 15 percent of searches called off after the positions were posted. The American Economic Association reported a 19 percent decrease.

Each of the three associations saw an increase in the number of Ph.D.s awarded in 2008-09 and are expecting the job search for new Ph.D. recipients looking for tenure-track positions to be especially competitive. Some Ph.D. candidates are delaying degree completion, and the number of postdoc applications has increased dramatically.

Distribution of Revenue Sources for Financing Higher Education 1952 to 2007



Source: National Income and Product Accounts; T. Mortenson, Presentation to the Council for Opportunity in Education, 9/11/2009



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Question:

Should every American have one year of college education?

Yes,
the technical, academic, and other skills gained in the first year of college may lead to a certificate or job.

SERENA OTA ST. CLAIR

America has embarked on a major economic rebuilding effort to bring prosperity into reach for those who are willing and able to work toward their goals. Industry in the United States calls for “middle-skilled” jobs that require technical skills gained beyond a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree. Reaching economic success will take individual effort and industry support for the concept of career pathways.



Getting started at college opens the door to possibilities. This is why everyone should plan to spend at least one year in college. The technical, academic, and critical thinking skills gained in one year of study may lead to the completion of a certificate and then landing a job with growth potential. Continuing on with coursework can mean finishing an associate and then bachelor’s degree. With each step comes greater financial reward. Supporting the process of building a career pathway makes a compelling case for one year of college education in America.

There is national movement to encourage and guide all high school students into a post-secondary education necessary for advancement in an increasingly technical, knowledge-based economy. We are focusing on building pathways between high schools and college programs. For adults too, education is a critical resource to establish a career pathway. Therefore it is essential to make college accessible to everyone who wants to learn. Education gives people hope for a bright future.

Serena Ota St. Clair, on faculty at Rogue Community College in Southern Oregon, acts as the Pathways and Articulation Coordinator, facilitating innovative curriculum development.

No,
students who actively choose to attend would be overwhelmed by those who do not.

DAN LINKER



To approach this topic from a practical standpoint, the word “should” can only be read with heavy connotations of “must,” or the conversation is about all those things which simply “should be” in an ideal setting. While there are many negative results of a mandate like this, three points immediately stand out.

First, creating a required year of college would result in a tremendous academic lowering of freshman level classes. They would be filled with adults present by compulsion, not choice, who would very likely question or not understand why they are there and react accordingly. Those students who actively choose to attend would be overwhelmed by those who do not.

The second effect would be required governmental control of colleges and universities. The outrageous expense aside, this would create a tremendous loss of both academic freedom in the classroom and independence for every institution.

Finally, the effect on student mentality would be profound. Already, many first-year students are unsure of why they attend college. Often, they pay to fail and fail. But when they are self-driven, they usually succeed.

I once saw a pirate T-shirt in a seaside novelty store that read, “The floggings will continue until morale improves.” I do not mean to imply that attending school is like being flogged, but the comparison is that when a system is flawed, simply forcing more of the same is not the answer. Compelling every American to have one year of college would, ironically, decrease our level of education.

Dan Linker has been teaching at Suffolk Community College in New York since 2001. He received his MA in English from Northeastern University.

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Send comments to
JRosales@nea.org

Opinion

I'd Like To Say!

AS TO THE DISCUSSION OF THE purpose of a college education, I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Rieger when he states that “persons possess capacities suited not just for work, but also for inquiry, discovery, reflection, understanding, integration, constructive criticism, and creative expression.” Developing workforce skills, he adds, does not necessarily entail fostering these skills and qualities. I agree.

A college education opens one up to more intellectual, emotional, and spiritual possibilities because it exposes one to a broader view of the world. The bottom line is that I feel that Dr. Rieger spoke of an education, whereas Dr. Baehler spoke of vocational training.

—Jeff Craig

Bristol Community College (MA)

AN INSTITUTION WITH THE MISSION “to make students employable” is a vocational school and cannot be labeled an institution of higher education. Education involves much, much more than job skills. A human being is more than a machine.

—Robert L. Cleve

*California State University,
Northridge*

SPEAKING OUT

Be an Organizer!

Until recently, I gave scant attention to training and workshops on “organizing.” Our membership rate was already high, and we had important issues to address. In the last year, I have come to understand that, in the words of an NEA guide, “Organizing is ... getting people to join together to work towards common goals.” That is the sort of organizing I sought. Now, more than ever, we in the NEA family must exert our collective influence to accomplish common goals. Public school funding is eroding throughout the country. We must work to protect it. Academic freedom is limited by several recent court decisions—we must preserve and defend it. The role of higher education faculty in shared governance is under assault at colleges and universities in every state—we must vigorously guard this central element of our profession. These are only a few of the crucial areas of public education that demand our efforts.

The Maine Education Association’s (MEA) 2009 Fall Conference included an all-day track titled, “Developing a Coordinated Higher Education Issue Campaign.” NEA staff members joined those of MEA to present a positive, practical program on organiz-

ing to achieve essential goals. Local leaders from Maine’s colleges and universities left the session energized and equipped to confront the issues we all face.

Last month, local leaders gathered in Maine for a one-day session titled, “Organizing to Increase Funding for Excellence in

Our Schools.” We are stemming the tide of budget cuts and freezes that threaten the basic fabric of our society.

In October, NEA convened a diverse group of higher education Association leaders in Washington to dis-

cuss NEA’s higher education mission and ways to make NEA truly the “voice of higher education.” The clear message, appreciated by all participants, is that all stakeholders are important in NEA. The efforts of the group were unmistakably directed toward organizing. All of these activities are part of organizing. It goes on all around us. We engage in organizing without realizing it. So, don’t shy away. Be an organizer!

“Organizing is ... getting people to join together to work towards common goals.”



Ron Mosley is a professor of business and law at the University of Maine at Machias. He is president of the Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine.