

# Advocate

## They're Talking on Campus...

... **ABOUT TECHNOLOGY CATCHING** cheaters in a state of the art testing center at the University of Central Florida business school. The center—which has hidden overhead cameras, proctors, and monitored computers—is meant to intimidate students who want to cheat, and apparently the scare tactic has worked. Cheating at the nation's third most populous campus has dropped significantly, down to 14 suspected incidents out of the 64,000 exams administered last semester. Plus, cheaters are easier to punish now that photos can document the crime. But the high-tech center hasn't prevented everyone from cheating. One student found a low-tech way to get around the security: He wrote notes on his heavily tattooed arm and blended them into his body art.

... **ABOUT COLLEGES INCREASING** spending on recreation more than they are increasing faculty pay, according to a recently released study on college costs. The study—which tracked the spending trends from 1998 through 2008—showed that American institutions of higher learning are spending a declining share of their budgets on instruction and an increasing share on nonacademic areas, such as sports facilities, public relations, and student services. This trend persisted no matter how the statisticians adjusted for a school's size, public/private status, or endowment. Nevertheless, this trend will likely change, study authors say, because the economy has made current spending patterns unsustainable, even at elite private universities.

## Eureka!

The common wisdom today within faculty departments is that you can't get through a meeting without someone venting about assessment. This issue's *Thriving in Academe* acknowledges the repulsion that usually accompanies

anything to do with assessment, while questioning why most faculty do not use assessment to transform courses, programs, and the institution itself.

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### NEA HIGHER ED CONFERENCE

The annual meeting will be March 25-27 in Boston.

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### PROFESSOR QUALITY MATTERS

Seasoned instructors produce academic success.

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### PRIVATE-SECTOR INFLUENCE

Do corporate gifts degrade teaching and learning?

## On the Road

WITH VALERIE WILK

**IN LATE SEPTEMBER, I TRAVELED TO** South Dakota State University (SDSU)—home of the Jackrabbits—to do organizing with leaders of South Dakota Education Association’s Council of Higher Education (COHE). The council represents some 1,300 full- and part-time faculty at all six of South Dakota’s public universities, plus teachers at state schools for the visually and hearing impaired. COHE higher ed faculty are covered under a statewide contract, and the union is getting ready for its next round of bargaining.

Together with SDSU political science professor and COHE statewide president Gary Aguiar, SDEA UniServ Director Loren Paul, and one of my Midwest Regional Office colleagues, Sara Gjerdrum, we held two evening sessions with leaders to practice doing office visits with their colleagues about the union. We reviewed lists of nonmembers and each leader developed a walk list of colleagues to visit. The object was not only to get information from faculty about their concerns and priorities for bargaining, but also to ask nonmembers to join and build a stronger union.

The day after each training session, my colleagues and I paired up with leaders to make these office visits. Our conversations surfaced concerns about academic freedom, the tenure and promotion process, workload, student attitudes, the role of the board of regents, and perceptions of faculty by the greater South Dakota community. More faculty are becoming COHE members because their union colleagues are visiting them and asking them to join. COHE SDSU leaders have not let up; they are continuing to organize and recruit new members.

—Valerie Wilk coordinates NEA’s higher education activities

## ACTIONLINE NEA

# Summit on Community Colleges

## Higher Ed Council President Visits White House

**Jim Rice, president of NEA’s National Council for Higher Education, represented NEA at the recent White House Summit on Community Colleges.**

Participants heard from President Barack Obama, Dr. Jill Biden, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, and others. Rice participated in the “Community Colleges in the 21st Century” session, facilitated by Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, Domestic Policy Council director Melody Barnes, and philanthropist Melinda Gates. The group discussed challenges and solutions, including the role of technology in promoting student learning. Rice focused on the inequities faced by contingent faculty, workload issues, and the need for community colleges to fully vet public-private partnership opportunities. He highlighted the opportunities for alumni and foundation development and the need for improvement of advising protocols. “Community college faculty and staff are by and large innovative and excited about their work and adaptable to challenges,” Rice said. For more information, see [www.whitehouse.gov/CommunityCollege](http://www.whitehouse.gov/CommunityCollege).



Secretary Solis with Jim Rice

what NEA and our union members can and are doing to redefine the academy. Workshop offerings will be targeted to all sectors of our higher ed membership, and will include sessions about effective teaching methods, online learning, collective bargaining issues for education support professionals and academic professional staff, state funding, organizing, salary and retirement benefit trends, and international higher education, among others. Leadership Day (24th) will feature workshops on research tools, collective bargaining, and organizing. Pre-conference activities also include the National Council for Higher Education membership meeting (24th-25th).

**NEA’s Office of Minority Community Outreach recently partnered with the American Federation of Teachers’ (AFT) Human Rights and Community Relations Department and the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute to host the “2010 State of Latinos in Education Summit.”** The summit was held for the U.S. Council on Latino Affairs (USCLA), which is comprised of state directors of Latino Affairs Councils and Commissions. Mary Ann Pacheco, longtime faculty and California Community College Association leader from Rio Hondo College, was a panelist with Dr. Eduardo Ochoa, Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education; Sarita Brown, President and Founder, Excelencia in Education; and Craig Smith, Deputy Director, Higher Education Department, AFT.

**Join us in Boston for NEA’s 29th Annual Higher Education Conference, March 25-27, 2011,** at the Park Plaza Hotel. The conference theme is “Radical Transformations in Higher Education.” Registration and hotel reservations are available at [www.nea.org/he](http://www.nea.org/he); early bird registration expires February 1. Plenary, workshop, and professional development sessions will look not only at what changes are occurring in higher education, but also at

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IN THE KNOW

## Professor Quality Matters

Seasoned instructors produce greater academic success for students than less-experienced instructors, though this is not reflected in student evaluations, a study finds.

Highly credentialed and experienced professors are better at preparing students for long-term academic success than their less-experienced counterparts, but that factor is not necessarily reflected in teaching evaluations produced by students, according to research by two economists published in the *Journal of Political Economy*.

Scott Carrell of the University of California, Davis, and James West of the U.S. Air Force Academy, raise questions about the value of student evaluations as measures of instructor quality. In their study, “Does Professor Quality Matter? Evidence from Random Assignment of Students to Professors,” Carrell and West looked at how well instructors in introductory courses prepare students for more advanced courses in related subjects.

The results of their research come from Calculus I and follow-on classes at the U.S. Air Force Academy, since all academy students are required to take Calculus I, Calculus II, and nine math-based technical courses regardless of their majors. Professors in all sections of classes use an identical syllabus and give identical exams. That gave Carrell and West the opportunity to compare instructors evenly.

The findings did not show that newer professors were “easy-graders,” because the

Calculus I course was designed to remove as much instructor discretion as possible from their student’s grades. Midterm and final exams are group-graded, where one instructor grades a single question for the entire course to ensure uniformity of partial credit.

The deep learning produced by more experienced instructors was not reflected in their students’ teaching evaluations, the study found. While the students of less experienced instructors tended to do better in the short-term but worse in the long run, the instructors received higher ratings on student evaluations. Student evaluations are widely used by colleges in faculty promotion and tenure decisions.

In all, the findings imply that student evaluations give instructors, especially those without tenure, incentive to teach in ways that “have great value for raising current scores, but may have little value for lasting knowledge,” the authors conclude.

“We find that less experienced and less qualified professors produce students who perform significantly better in the contemporaneous course being taught, whereas more experienced and highly qualified professors produce students who perform better in the follow-on related curriculum,” say Carrell and West.

## From Capitol to Campus

**THE NEW 112TH CONGRESS WILL HAVE MANY NEWLY-ELECTED MEMBERS WHO** evidently believe they have a public mandate to cut government. The House will have the largest Republican majority in several decades, while the Senate remains barely Democratic. The incoming Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee, John Kline (R-MN), has said jobs and education reform will be his top priorities.

That could mean early consideration of the Workforce Investment Act, and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The last two Congresses have dealt extensively with the Higher Education Act, and further major changes to the statute are unlikely. Chairman Kline has said he will revisit the college cost conversation, expressing concern about transparency and strain on families during tough economic times.

In the Senate, HELP Committee Chairman Tom Harkin will continue his investigation into the for-profit sector, and in partnership with Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), Harkin is likely to introduce legislation that would curb certain practices at for-profits schools that have been exposed in a recent GAO investigation. Republicans are less supportive of such legislation, and getting something into law will be difficult.

Education committees will be watching closely as the Obama Administration proceeds with pending gainful employment regulations. The largest and most serious concern for higher education will be the strong desire of the new Congress to reduce the federal deficit and federal spending. There will be scrutiny of all domestic discretionary spending and perhaps deep cuts for all federal agencies—including the Department of Education.

### FLASH POINTS

According to Carrell and West, the results of their study suggest that less experienced instructors have a tendency to “teach to the test,” while more experienced teachers produce “deep learning” of the subject matter that helps students with future coursework. The study (discussed above) found that:

- Students’ achievement in advanced Calculus coursework was strongly influenced by their Calculus I instructor.
- Students who had a seasoned Calculus I professor with a Ph.D. tended to do better in subsequent coursework than students who had less experienced and less credentialed Calculus I instructors.
- Students of veteran instructors did well despite the fact that students of seasoned professors tended to have lower grades in Calculus I.

### Organizing

**Members of the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC) recently participated** in the Massachusetts Teachers Association's Emerging Leaders program, which focused on the importance of organizing members. For the past three years, MTA has been transitioning from a service model, where members pay their dues and union officials work on their behalf, to one that is more member-driven. As reported in the September issue of *MCCC News*, the MTA Strategic Action Plan has six recommendations for mobilizing members, measuring progress by individual locals, and increasing influence over public policy. MTA President Paul Toner attended the conference and the Higher Education Leadership Council meeting at Williamstown where he spoke about the importance of organizing and mobilizing members.

Meanwhile, in early October, the full-time faculty, librarians, and counselors on the four campuses of Seminole State College in central Florida voted to unionize with United Faculty of Florida/FEA/NEA/AFT. With a 92 percent turnout, the vote was 115 for and 67 against.

### Campus Activities

**An unprecedented number of community college students are transferring to four-year colleges and universities.** Since 2000, community college transfers have increased by over 30 percent in Maryland and Virginia and have spiked nationwide, according a recent article in *Community College Week*. In the wake of the recession, more and more students are unable to pay four years of undergraduate tuition, so they are taking a cheaper route to a bachelor's degree. Before beginning university, these students save money, often by working full-time and living with their parents. This means that their college experience is different than most, and that they are often older and poorer than the average student. Because of this, many transfer students feel out of place on their college campus, but administrators are trying to change that. Some schools offer transfer students special orientations and pair them with other transfers as room-mates; and eight states have adopted common course-number systems that guarantee the transferability of community college credits.

### Contracts

**Faculty Win in FSU Layoff Case—Twenty-three professors at Florida State University (FSU) won back their jobs** after an arbitrator rescinded layoffs of tenured faculty in a recent ruling which came in response to legal actions filed by United Faculty of Florida (UFF). While the layoffs clearly violated the union contract, FSU administrators argued that the layoffs were necessary as responses to budget cuts. But the arbitrator found that the administration exceeded its authority to make changes when it eliminated and recombined programs in "arbitrary and unreasonable" ways that showed "blatant manipulation of the layoff units." UFF represents faculty at Florida's 11 public universities, 10 public colleges, one private college and the graduate assistants at four public universities.

"Because tenure is so important for protecting academic freedom and shared governance, this is a win for all faculty," said Jack Fiorito, faculty union president at FSU. "If faculty members feel like even the tenured people dare not speak up, then the non-tenured faculty members certainly are not going to speak up."

Tom Auxter, statewide UFF president, said, "in this economy, with budget cuts looming and without laws effectively protecting tenure and academic freedom, the contract is all we have left to defend faculty against abuses of power and violations of rights."

In other UFF news, University of South Florida trustees ratified a new contract for the faculty chapter and a reopener for the graduate employee chapter of UFF. The faculty contract includes expanded sabbaticals, a domestic partner health insurance stipend program, an early retirement incentive program, and guaranteed merit raises for 2010 and 2011.

The graduate employee contract settled with an increase in health care insurance premium payments to 100 percent coverage for 0.50 full-time employee graduate assistants and approximately 65 percent for 0.25 employees.

## Higher Ed Supporters Take to the Streets to Protest Budget Cuts



Faculty members, staff, students, and alumni organized by the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM) spent six days on the road and made several stops at organized events along the way as protest against cuts in state funding. They walked from Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield to the Massachusetts Statehouse in Boston to send the message to legislators that they must reverse the state's disinvestment in its public colleges, state universities and UMass. Marching with the group is Max Page (in white T-shirt, beard), a Massachusetts Teachers Association Executive Committee member and UMass professor.

PHOTO: SARAH MITMAN

# Thriving in Academe

## Assessment, Teaching, and Learning

BY CATHERINE M. WEHLBURG, TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Assessment may seem like a four-letter word, but it isn't! Assessing learning is what college faculty do best. Why, then, do many of us have such a negative, visceral reaction to it?

You can't get through a faculty department meeting without someone mentioning the word "assessment." Usually, that word is said with some repulsion and possibly a shiver or two. But, let's look at this in a slightly different light. "Assessment" is a word that just means to evaluate or appraise. On any given college or university campus, what group knows the most about evaluating student learning? Which group knows exactly what a student should learn and what that student can do once she has learned it? Of course, it's the faculty. Faculty know content. Faculty know when a student has learned content and what a student looks like who has not.

Faculty know how to measure learning. So why have most faculty not grabbed assessment and pushed it forward?

There are probably as many answers to this as there are faculty members. But, no one likes to be told what to do. And, if someone (like your Dean or your Provost) tells you that you have to do something, you may do it—but you don't have to like it. And, faculty are busy—why add another task that won't even help you with tenure and promotion? So assessment on our campuses has turned into a big bureaucratic, hoop jump. But it doesn't have to be this way. Assessment can help you transform your courses, your program, and even your institution.



### MEET CATHERINE WEHLBURG

**Catherine Wehlburg** is the assistant provost for Institutional Effectiveness at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. She has taught psychology and educational psychology courses for more than a decade, serving as department chair and then branching into faculty development and assessment. Dr. Wehlburg has worked with both the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and the Commission on Colleges with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as an outside evaluator. She is the author of *Promoting Integrated and Transformative Assessment: A Deeper Focus on Student Learning* and *Meaningful Course Revision: Enhancing Academic Engagement Using Student Learning Data*. She is currently the editor in chief of *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*.

## Tales from Real Life

GET REAL ANSWERS

**AS A NEWLY HIRED FACULTY MEMBER**, fresh from graduate school, I stepped into a campus-wide preparation for a reaccreditation visit. Now, my training is in educational psychology, so I know how to write outcomes and measure learning. The first thing I noticed is that the reaccreditation preparation committee were running around in a relative frenzy trying to get the report written correctly without thinking a lot about the information that they needed. There was a lot of talk about margins and page length, but not a lot about what our students were really learning. This made me realize that assessment should never simply be only about procedural stuff. Instead, we should be asking questions that would get us the information we needed to enhance the educational process for our students. That meant asking the hard questions so that we would get real answers that were helpful ... not because we were up for reaccreditation, but because we cared about learning.

Of course, I ended up on the committee and I chaired the writing committee of our successful reaccreditation visit. But, in doing this, I was able to see all of the fabulous teaching and learning that went on across campus—things that I never knew our students were learning! In general, we don't give ourselves enough credit for creating incredible learning experiences for our students. But we should—because if you are teaching and your students are learning, you are probably doing some excellent assessment work.

—Catherine M. Wehlburg  
Texas Christian University

## Faculty and Assessment

Assessment should be a transformative process that engages both the teacher and the learner and results in an even better educational experience. And, you may be already doing it.

Assessing student learning is done hundreds of thousands of times each day on college and university campuses. Often, this information is used to help the faculty member decide what particular grade is appropriate for that particular student. This type of evaluation can also be used in a transformative way. To do this, the faculty member can look across students to determine which topics or areas of the class seem to cause students the most problems. Then, using that information, the faculty member can make changes that make sense given the context of that course. This use of student learning data is so embedded in most of our courses, that we often don't even know that we are performing transformative assessment. But—we are. And, our students and future students would thank us for that if they knew what we did.

Transformative assessment, then, is a process that provides information and is appropriate, meaningful, sustainable, flexible and ongoing, and uses data for improvement with the potential for substantive change. While the information we gather from our courses can also be used to demonstrate outcomes to others (for program or institutional level assessment), transformative assessment is primarily focused on how to enhance student learning and that learning typically takes place in the classroom. Notice, too, that you are double dipping! The same assignment that you use to evaluate a student can also be used to assess the overall course. Using these “embedded assessments” for student evaluation and assessment typically means that the student work product is a more authentic measure of the learning outcome.

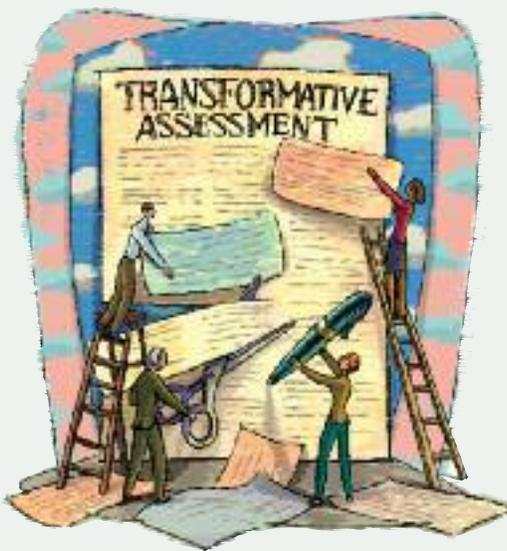
In order to be effective, transformative assessment should be appropriate, meaningful, sustainable, flexible, and should be used to improve teaching and learning.

### Transformative Assessment is Appropriate

The word “appropriate” implies that the assessment should fit a particular faculty member’s teaching style, a specific course, the department, or even the institution. What works in one class for an assessment tool or assignment will not necessarily work in another. I taught a class as an adjunct once and had to use another faculty member’s syllabus. While the student exams and assignments may have worked well for another person, they did not fit with the way I taught. So, even though the students learned the

material (as shown by their exam scores), I wasn't able to use many of the assignments in a transformative way – they just didn't give me the type of information about student learning that I needed.

“Cookie cutter” approaches to assessment will almost always fail to become transformative processes. Taking this idea to the next level, departmental outcomes will be specific to the content and context of that department at that specific institution. A biology department’s outcomes from a small, private, liberal arts college may be similar to a biology department from a large, research university with a large graduate student population, but they will probably not be identical. The context of the institutional mission will have impact on the department mission statement and resulting outcomes.



### Transformative Assessment is Meaningful

Without a meaningful approach to assessment, the process is almost always doomed to becoming an add-on task that is done for bureaucratic purposes only. Meaningful assessment practices are those in which the faculty member really cares about the results. If your course has a focus on critical thinking, your course outcomes would likely focus (at least in part) on critical thinking. And, you would be interested in finding out how well your students were learning. And, if many of them seemed to be falling short of where you wanted them to be, you would use that to transform some of what you did in that course. If you didn't care if your students learned to think critically, but you were measuring critical thinking, you probably wouldn't care too much if they learned it or not.

You may remember the feeling of gathering your research data for the first time as a graduate student. You probably did what I did—await the first results with bated breath! Getting those survey responses or seeing the lab results is quite thrilling, and it is exciting because it is meaningful. Assessment results could be viewed in the same way if they are truly meaningful. Course, department, and institutional assessment plans and measures should result in data that faculty care about.

### Transformative Assessment is Sustainable

No matter how meaningful and appropriate your assessment or evaluation project is, it won't be used for longer than one cycle if it can't be sustained. Often, as an institution gets ready for an accreditation visit, elaborate and time-consuming assessment structures are put into place. While the data that are collected may be useful

and important, if the added time and resources to do the assessment are too great, the assessment process will not be sustained. Similarly, if the time spent grading a large project becomes too time consuming, you may not choose to keep it in the course for the next semester if it becomes more work than it is worth.

### **Transformative Assessment is Flexible and Ongoing**

Once you have developed your evaluation and assignment outline for your course or your department has created a department-level assessment plan for the major, and you have measured your measures and used your findings for improvement, what happens? If the assessment process is flexible, then the assessment results should suggest modifications for the next course or academic year. You may be horrified to find out that the assessment process is never-ending! But just like teaching and learning it is ongoing, and it should be a formative process that is re-evaluated at the beginning and the end of each course. This flexibility of your assessment plan will lead to sustainability, and this will promote the ongoing (or never-ending) distinctive mark of a transformative assessment process.

Just as any course taught may be modified each semester based on the course evaluations, student responses on exams, and needs of the department, so should departmental and institutional assessment plans. If a department is working on enhancing student learning, student learning will probably increase in particular areas. This should prompt you to “raise the bar” in

terms of student learning outcomes. What once might have once been an acceptable level of learning might not be satisfactory any longer.

### **Transformative Assessment should be used for Improvement with the Potential for Substantive Change**

Clearly, if an assessment program is going to be successful, data must be used for improvement and there must be the potential for change. Assessment is not a product or an end – it is a process that leads to enhanced teaching, learning, and informed decision. “Doing” assessment is very different from using the results of an assessment process. If you think of assess-

ment as something that is only done for others (accreditation or a board of trustees, for example), your assessment process will never be one that is transformative. But when you see your ongoing assessment planning gives you information about what needs improvement, transformation can happen.

Transformative assessment also means that sometimes your results come in demonstrating that there needs to be a change because something is working. This is the hallmark of transformation. You need to know what isn’t working along with knowing what to keep. True change comes from realizing what needs to be removed or redesigned in your course or even your department. Knowing what isn’t working is an opportunity to make modifications.

*Transformative assessment means that sometimes your results come in demonstrating that there needs to be a change.*

## BEST PRACTICES

### **Creative Ways to Assess Student Learning**

We all know about assessing student learning using exams and papers, but there are other methods to find out what students really know and how they think. While some of these may take a bit more time to create and to grade, the results can be worth the time that is invested!

**PORTFOLIOS** – Over time, students gather elements of their work to put into a portfolio. These can demonstrate student knowledge and the learning that led up to it. Asking students to do some self-evaluation can be a great tool with portfolios, too. I have had students write an analysis of their own work based on course outcomes. These are often



very insightful and cause the student to appreciate the work that has been done!

**COURSE-SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS** – What do you want your students to learn and how would you know that they had learned this?

Making assignments that are very specific to your course can enhance learning and avoid problems with plagiarism. For example, a nutrition course assignment has students keep a three-day record of their food consumption, analyze it, report on their eating patterns and overall healthiness, and then create a plan for improving it.

**CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES** – Angelo and Cross (1993) created a set of these CATs. One of them is a “minute paper” in which students are asked to write for one minute to answer a specific question from the instructor.

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## ISSUES TO CONSIDER

# Understanding Assessments

### Answering some of the most often asked questions in assessing learning

**Why shouldn't grades be used as a measure of learning?** Grades certainly are an indicator of learning – the problem is that we can't tell what learning has happened just from the grade. Here's an example, a student in my General Psychology course received a "B" on the second exam. How much psychology does she know? Of course, you have no idea. There simply isn't enough information. But, if I showed you the exam, showed you the questions that she had gotten correct, and linked that to a specific learning outcome (such as "the student will correctly identify positive and negative reinforcement when given several examples"), you would know how much specific knowledge that student had shown. Grades are not usually about a single learning outcome, and they often include points for turning in a paper on time or page length. While all these are important, they can cloud the issue of assessing learning for a specific outcome.

**What's in it for me?** Well, this is a hard one to answer because much of it depends on your particular institutional reward structure. But, putting aside course release time or stipends, there are elements of assessment that make it worth the time invested. When you assess student learning in your course and can identify areas that could be enhanced, you will end up with a better learning experience for your future students. Your students may learn more, they may become even more engaged

with your class, and they will perform better on assignments. What's not to love?

**How do I get colleagues to buy in?** The short answer is that you can't. But, that doesn't mean that you can't try! By this I don't mean that you become the "assessment pusher" in your department. But, by assessing learning in your courses and talking about how that has helped you to make tweaks and other improvements, you may help to bring your unbelieving colleagues to view assessment as having a positive impact on teaching

and learning. And, even by asking for learning outcomes to be placed on your departmental agenda, you can help by focusing the discussion on what students should be learning in courses and across the department. And don't forget to find

the assessment office on your campus! They may be called by other names, but they will have a wealth of ideas and even resources to help you.

**How do I measure things that can't be counted?** Keep in mind that you don't always have to count things in order to measure them. Qualitative research is extremely valuable in gathering rich information that can give you new insights into your course. What is the quality of discussion in your class? How deeply are students responding to essays? By getting answers to these qualitative questions, you can measure things that aren't countable.



## 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](http://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 Robertson, ([drobot@fiu.edu](mailto:drobot@fiu.edu)) at Florida International University or John Rosales ([JRosales@nea.org](mailto:JRosales@nea.org)) at NEA.

## World

**As government officials in Britain announced devastating cuts to universities—** as part of the government's plan to reduce public-sector costs—an estimated 50,000 students marched peacefully on the Parliament building last November while a breakaway group stormed the headquarters of Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative Party. At press time, reports indicated that the government was likely to cut about 80 percent of the current \$6.2 billion it pays annually for university teaching and about \$1.6 billion from the \$6.4 billion it provides for research. The plan could triple the cost of tuition for hundreds of thousands of students.

To make up for the shortfall, universities would have to raise tuition to an average of more than \$11,000, which would require Parliament to lift the cap on such fees, now set at \$5,260.

While Britain's universities are heavily subsidized by the state, a series of recent cuts have forced administrators to reduce the number of classes and shut down departments.

## Nation

**The California Supreme Court recently decided unanimously that undocumented immigrants may continue to be eligible for in-state tuition rates at the state's colleges and universities rather than pay the higher rates charged to those who live out of state.** The high court held that California law that guarantees the lower tuition for students who attend California high schools for at least three years and graduate does not conflict with a federal prohibition on giving illegal immigrants educational benefits based on residency.

California is one of several states that permit undocumented immigrants to take advantage of lower college tuition for students who attend high school and graduate in state. About 25,000 undocumented immigrants are estimated to receive in-state tuition rates in California.

The court observed that the state law also benefits U.S. citizens who reside in other states but attend and graduate from high school in California.

## Professional News

**Faced with the challenge of boosting student achievement in the face of slimmer budgets, many colleges and universities are turning to technology for a solution.** Since 1999, teams of faculty members and administrators at 150 diverse institutions have partnered with the nonprofit National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) to redesign a variety of courses, from general biology to world literature.

NCAT's tech transformations don't involve cutting teachers—only one of the six redesign models is fully online, while the others supplement traditional instruction with interactive software.

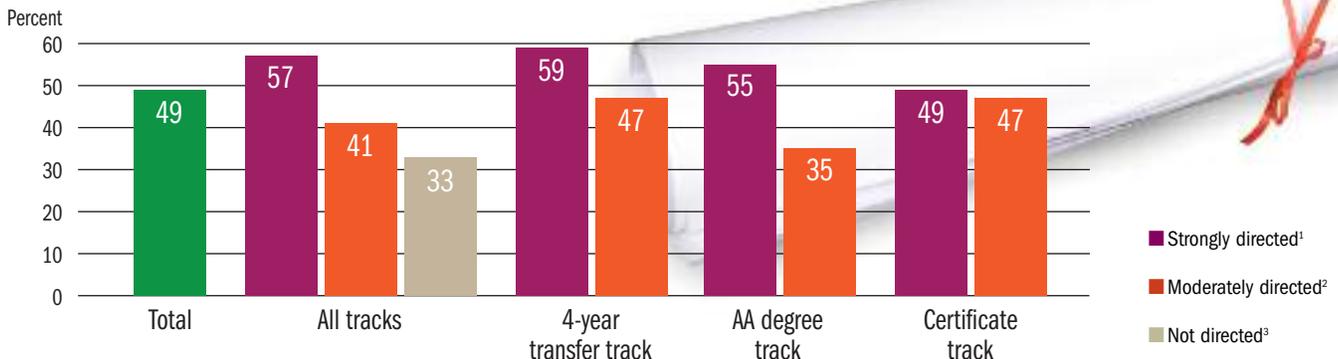
For the high-enrollment introductory courses on which NCAT has focused, this software offers students instant feedback, new modes for group collaboration and opportunities for extra practice, said NCAT vice president Carolyn Jarmon.

"Students have more modes of engagement than they ever have before," she said. For more on course redesign, see [www.thencat.org](http://www.thencat.org).

## 2003–04 Community College Students Who Were Still Enrolled

or had attained a degree or certificate from first institution or transferred to a 4-year institution within 3 years of enrollment (institutional retention), by Community College Taxonomy: 2006

### 3-year institutional retention



<sup>1</sup> Reported intentions to complete program, enrolled in formal degree program in first term (if AA or certificate track), and attended at least half time in first year.

<sup>2</sup> Did not meet "strongly directed" criteria, but enrolled in a formal degree/certificate program or reported intentions to complete a credential or 4-year transfer.

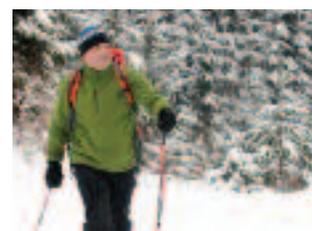
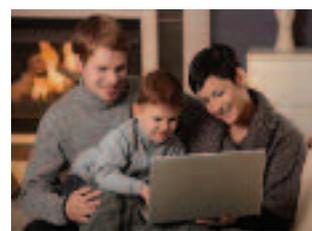
<sup>3</sup> Not enrolled in formal degree/certificate program and did not report intentions to complete a credential or 4-year transfer.

NOTE: Students attending more than one institution were excluded. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Standard error tables are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/das/library/reports.asp>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003/04 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, First Follow-up (BPS:04/06).

# New Year Offerings

There's a lot of fun stuff to smile about



Let NEA Member Benefits Help Make this New Year Bright

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## Question:

**Do corporate gifts and grants to higher education institutions undermine or degrade teaching and learning?**

**Yes,**  
**corporations have no business setting academic and pedagogical directions.**

CRAIG SLATIN

**No,**  
**corporate grants open the door to student opportunities and provide support for faculty research.**

RON UTECHT

I believe that corporate gifts and grants to higher education institutions undermine and degrade teaching and learning. They are the flip side of corporate efforts to reduce taxes on wealth and profits, which has led the Massachusetts Legislature to steadily reduce public higher education system funding over many years. Without much success, system leaders seek corporate gifts and grants in lieu of state funding, but private gifts will never adequately meet system funding needs.



Teaching and learning can be undermined if programs are encouraged to be attractive to corporations, all of whose charters require profit-making as their primary duty.

Reductions in government funding for higher education (budgets and student financial aid) put the burden for financing on students and their families. University of Massachusetts fees have been increasing for years, the latest increase being \$1,500 last year. Most students have large loans to repay. They lack time to study and reflect on course material. I'm always impressed by how well they do under these circumstances, even as I'm frustrated by the limits of their learning capacity.

The corporate sector demands that government cuts to higher education support budgets. It then offers gifts that don't make up for the cuts and that establish directions for teaching and learning. Corporations have no business setting academic and pedagogical directions. A less degrading way for corporations to support college teaching and learning is for them to pay taxes commensurate to their vast wealth.

For more information, see a recent issue of the AAUP online magazine at [www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/](http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/).

**Craig Slatin**, is a professor and chair of the Department of Community Health and Sustainability in the School of Health and Environment, University of Massachusetts Lowell. He has been teaching public health policy since 1999.



I have received corporate support for research from both a large multinational corporation and a struggling start-up. My students have participated in both research projects. Not only did this funding provide the resources to fund their research, it also provided a glimpse into the daily operations of a corporate research environment. On a recent project, I

had a very gifted but unsure graduate student funded by a large corporate grant in which we reported our progress monthly. After a few reports lead by the student, he says he realized that he was doing world class research. This experience was pivotal in his education. He eventually took a corporate research position upon graduation in which he was afforded the type of responsibility and autonomy usually reserved for much more experienced scientists.

In my field of biochemistry, we have the opportunities to develop technologies that could have significant benefit in fields such as medicine if developed to a product. In the research and development timeline there is a region after the discovery stages funded by traditional academic grants but before product development known as the "Valley of Death." Corporate grants can be used to support this translational research providing the faculty with additional opportunities.

I have never experienced any of the perceived downsides of corporate sponsorship such as pressure to influence research results or to prevent publication. I believe that this alternative avenue is only positive as long as the role of the professor is kept clearly in focus.

**Ron Utecht, Ph.D.**, is a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at South Dakota State University. He joined the faculty in 1988 and has served as the state president of the South Dakota Education Association's Council of Higher Education.

### WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Send comments to  
[JRosales@nea.org](mailto:JRosales@nea.org)

## Opinion

### I'd like to say!

**IN RESPONSE TO "THRIVING,"** MY colleague and I developed a team-teaching approach for our "bridge" students in critical reading transitioning into a literature class. These students are commonly either a developmental student needing further assistance in reading or a student that tested into reading because of their low Accuplacer score. Our topic was also poetry. We collaborate and co-teach this lesson to the same type of "disinterested" students featured in "Naturally Averting Student Contempt" article. We incorporate technology and music, and added a response to the literature component.

—Christine Kiehart  
Lackawanna College  
Scranton, PA

#### I AM WRITING TO COMMENT ON

"Thriving Academe" (October), particularly "Issues to Consider: Why Quarters?" I am an adjunct lecturer. While I often teach an introductory class that falls into the category Dr. Lewes describes ("the distribution course, populated almost entirely by non-majors who are there simply because they must be"), I believe my students are a little too worldly to perform for quarters. Much more importantly, I make so little teaching that I save every quarter I come in contact with in order to do my own laundry. (Forget about affording dry cleaning!)

—Laura Morris  
Hunter College, CUNY  
New York, NY

## SPEAKING OUT

### Going Native

**M**e: digital immigrant. You: digital native. When the 'me' is the professor and the 'you' is the student how does the digital immigrant/digital native metaphor affect how we meet in steel and concrete classrooms anywhere?

I borrow the digital immigrant/digital native concept from an article Marc Prensky wrote nearly a decade ago. The topic seems more relevant now than then. Many of today's college students have come of age with Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) binoculars to search the World Wide Web; with Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)) to isolate facts; and with Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) for documenting visual images of their lives in the social networks they create. Digital natives.

When these digital natives scan my syllabus with its injunction that hand-held devices are prohibited during class time, do they sense my craftiness at fathoming how smart phones and media players can wreak havoc on the attention span and diminish academic achievement?

Or do they believe I am a Luddite, a person who fears and loathes technology?

I am no Luddite. I embrace technologies which have appeal to digital immigrants and digital natives alike.

Students 'in the know' are grateful I have caught up with presentation tools like Microsoft PowerPoint that allow me to incorporate animation, sound, and images for a rather more engaging interaction than

that afforded by a dusty chalkboard.

That the PowerPoint technology appeals to multiple senses means it reaches different learning styles and makes it more likely students remain engaged. They are especially engaged when they become guardians of the technology.

When a young person connects to a microblogging service and shares with everyone how she might create a 140-character Tweet campaign to reduce tobacco use, the chasm

between digital native and digital immigrant narrows.

When the class gathers to watch videos students have uploaded to YouTube the chasm between digital immigrant and digital native narrows.

Our greatest philosopher of education, John Dewey, notes

that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum, and have the opportunity to take part in their own learning.

He reminds us that as teachers our goals should not be to impose dogmas or rigid ideas but to facilitate our students' urge to be self-directed life-long learners.

I am going native.

*I am no Luddite. I embrace technologies which have appeal to digital immigrants and digital natives alike.*



**Nigel Thomas** has been a lecturer in the Health, Physical Education, and Wellness Department at Bronx Community College, City University of New York, since 2004. He is also a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University.