



Inquiry and Professional Development in Support of Student Success and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Cosumnes River College

CASSELL Activities Summary

Goals for the Center for the Advancement of Student Learning

- 1) To disseminate information about effective teaching strategies and provide access to educational research and other sources that can help employees' efforts to support students and to enhance a positive teaching/learning environment at CRC.
- 2) To provide a place where CRC faculty can share their teaching expertise and research interests and experiences, including the utilization of student learning outcomes and other tools to improve learning.
- 3) To inform faculty of upcoming trainings related to teaching effectiveness and scholarship of teaching, including opportunities to enhance their ability to conduct classroom-based research.
- 4) To provide a place for CRC faculty and staff to discuss various issues related to teaching and to explore strategies to enhance student learning, including the utilization of student learning outcomes.
- 5) To provide a place that showcases best practices that are utilized at the college with respect to various aspects of the teaching and learning environment, including cultural competence.
- 6) To provide a place for dialogue about ways to enhance the success of our students.

Overview of CASSELL Activities:

- Workshops
- Seminars and Colloquia
- Support for the scholarship of teaching and learning
- Support for outcomes development and assessment
- Support for research projects
- Dissemination of best practices and research
- Resources
- Technical Assistance
- Research Grants

Major CASSL Events

CASSL Seminars: In a seminar format, CRC faculty and staff explore teaching and learning “best practices” in the various disciplines represented by seminar participants. Seminar participants review assigned readings on each general topic and engage in lively intellectual discussion of those readings informed by their own experiences with students.

- Fall 2007 Seminar (two sessions): The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Series -Seminar 1: New Approaches to Teaching and Learning
- Spring 2008 Seminar (two sessions): Seminar 2 - Our Changing Classrooms: The nuts and bolts of teaching in our diverse and changing world

See attached for more information about each seminar.

SLO Institutes: Learning and working sessions that assist CRC faculty and staff in completing campus processes and support outcomes implementation at CRC.

- May 2005: Introduction to Program Student Learning Outcomes
- October 2005: Advanced Program Student Learning Outcomes
- Feb 2006: Completing the PrOF (special one-day workshop)
- April 2006: Using SLO’s to Connect Basic Skills to Careers
- May 2007: Course-embedded Outcomes Assessment
- Jan 2008: Implementing Student Learning Outcomes

CASSL Colloquia: This annual daylong event, held just prior to the beginning of Fall Semester, brings together college faculty and staff from the greater Sacramento Region to discuss topics around the scholarship of teaching and learning.

- August 2006: College and Cultures: The experience of our first-year students
- August 2007: College and Cultures: How do we measure what our students are learning?

See attached for more information about each seminar

Professional Development

Workshops: CASSL sponsors workshops related to current issues in educational research, best practices for working with students, and dissemination of data from the college Research Office. These workshops meet periodically in CASSL and are advertised in the PD booklet and details of the workshops can be found there and in the upcoming events section of the CASSL Newsletter (attached).

- Fall 2007: 6 brown bag lunches, 6 outcomes dialogues, 3 educational research workshops
- Spring 2008: 8 brown bag lunches

Support for Campus Initiatives: CASSL provides support for campus initiatives that engage best teaching practices in support of student success. This has included work with the following:

- Educational Initiative programs 2005-2006
- Basic Skills Initiative 2007-2008
- Accreditation Self-study Standard Teams 2008

Direct Assistance to Departments: CASSL provides support for departments working on outcomes implementation and program planning. CASSL staff will come to a department or program meeting or work one on one with individual faculty or staff members.

Assistance to programs developing SLO’s or PrOF

- 2005: A variety of work with departments updating course outlines (in conjunction with Curriculum Committee work).
- 2006: Automotive Technology, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Counseling/HCD, ECE, English, ESL, Horticulture, HSDOT, Human Services, Mathematics, Physics, Work Experience.

- 2007: Counseling ,Welding, Humanities, Physical Education and Athletics (all departments), HSDOT, Biology, ECE, English, Computer Science, Foreign Languages.
- 2008: Philosophy, Business, ESL, HSDOT, Mathematics

Assistance to faculty doing classroom based research, or seeking information about teaching best practices:

- **2006:**
 - Beginning basic skills joint classroom assessment, Catherine Hooper, Catherine Hooper, Lesley Gale, Janet Macias, Kimberly Williams-Brito;
 - Effectiveness of on-line exercises as part of a course for automotive students, Drew Carlson, Michael Pereira
- **2007:**
 - Accessing data about student success, L. Fowler;
 - Improving math student success; M. Martin, etc.;
 - Writing effective course outlines, N. George,
 - Models of curriculum M. Makantabana,
 - Effective teaching methods for science students, B. Dushman
 - Survey of why students don't complete homework assignments, D. Hodapp
- **2008:** See CASSL Innovation Grants

CASSL Innovation Grants:

These grants provide small honoraria to faculty and staff involved in educational or classroom based research. This program began Spring 2008.

- **Anthropology:** Anastasia Panagakos and Amanda Wolcott Paskey are researching the effectiveness of hands-on activities in Cultural Anthropology classes.
- **Art:** Margaret Woodcock will be working to develop a process of outcomes assessment for creative arts departments.
- **Counseling:** Lynn Fowler is undertaking a study of why students fail to utilize priority registration times.
- **English:** Matthew Abergel and Linda Sneed are working on research into the effective teaching of writing in non-Composition classes.
- **Library:** Marjorie Schreiber will be studying issues related to the impact of textbook costs the ways in which Library Course Reserves could be used to address this problem.
- **Math:** Camille Moreno and Kimberly Williams-Brito are examining the implementation of the "Math Academy" model at CRC.
- **Radio, TV, and Film Production:** BJ Snowden will be exploring the expectations of adult learners as they begin their work as CRC students.
- **Student Government and Leadership:** Winnie LaNier is conducting a broad review of existing Leadership programs in community colleges, and how those programs articulate with the CSU and UC systems.

CASSL email discussion group:

Many CRC faculty and staff participate in email discussions of issues relevant to their work at the college. Topics range widely, but all are related to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Currently the discussion list has approximately 100 members.

Academic Senate, committees, and similar related activities

- Frequent guest at AS meeting reporting on CASSL-related issues
- Member of district diversity training Ad Hoc Group
- Member Professional Development Committee
- Resource person for Basic Skills Initiative task group
- Resource person for all standard teams for the CRC Accreditation Self-study
- PrOF review subcommittee

- Budget committee

CASSL Research

Why Students Drop Classes:

During Fall Semester 2007 a group of CRC faculty from Humanities, English, Math, and Physical Education worked with CASSL on a pilot study of why students drop classes. From week 4 to week 12 of the semester, students who dropped the classes in the pilot study were called and asked if they would explain why they dropped the class, if they had talked to a teacher, counselor or coach before dropping, if they planned to take the class again, and if there was anything CRC could have done to help them stay in the class. A total of 112 students were called and 44 students were contacted and responded. (summary report attached)

Print materials produced:

- Student Learning Outcomes Handbook for CRC.
- Evaluating Student Learning: Assessment of Outcomes (document for OAT)
- Student Learning Outcome Assessment for Courses: A Brief Overview for Classroom Faculty
- Overview of SLOs at CRC: An SLO Primer
- Writing Course Outcomes in SOCRATES
- CRC Outcomes Assessment Primer
- CASSL Newsletters
- CASSL Program Review
- Documents used in the CASSL Institutes

SLO Development and Implementation:

Led development of college-wide SLOs. CASSL conducted focus groups of faculty and staff, developed draft of college-wide outcomes, and led dialogue about proposed draft. College-wide outcomes were approved by Academic Senate May 2004

Led Curriculum Committee development of SLO policies and procedures. The Curriculum Committee from 2004-2006 was also a member of CASSL staff. The Curriculum Committee appointed an ad hoc subcommittee tasked with developing procedures for stating course and program outcomes in SOCRATES. The subcommittee and the Curriculum Committee chair led a broad college dialogue concerning SLO development and conducted training for interested faculty and staff.

Outcomes Assessment Task Force Co-chair. The committee charge is to develop recommendations concerning a set of strategies and tools that can be used to document the assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, and college level. The task force is working to:

- Recommend a framework for outcomes assessment at CRC
- Recommend a cycle of assessment and processes for the reporting of outcomes assessment
- Develop and provide support and training for staff involved in outcomes assessment.

Other SLO Work:

- Work with Curriculum Chair on how to improve curriculum review with respect to outcomes implementation.
- Presentation at Student Success Conference 2007; strand leader for the 2008 conference.
- WASC/ACCJC Accreditation team training and visit spring 08 to Palo Verde CC
- Presentation at Convocation 2007, 2008
- Presentations at Fall and Spring Adjunct meetings 2007, 2008
- Presentations at Curriculum Committee meetings

- Presentation at statewide Outcomes Institute June 2007; attended statewide Outcomes Institute January 2008; host for Regional SLO Coordinators meeting April 2008.

YOU ARE INVITED

CASSL Seminars in Teaching and Leadership

Professional seminars focused on the scholarship of teaching and leadership. Conducted as an academic seminar, the group will meet for over the course of several weeks to examine recent research, discuss readings and share best practices. Online discussion will extend the conversation for those interested. All CRC staff are welcome to participate.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Seminar 1: New approaches to teaching and learning

Join us as we share best practices and learn about recent innovations in teaching and learning. This seminar will be useful for experienced teachers and other staff who wish to explore the scholarship of teaching, new teachers who are beginning to develop their teaching practices, and student services faculty and staff who help guide students through their learning experiences.

Two sessions – Open to 12 participants per session

Session 1A: Mondays 5-7 pm, CASSL, September 10 – November 5

Session 1B: Fridays 10-12 am, CASSL, October 5 - December 6

Outcomes: We will...

- engage in intellectual discussions of the scholarship of teaching and learning
- increase our understanding of teaching “best practices” utilized in different disciplines
- become familiar with recent innovations in teaching methodologies and course design
- be able to apply the seminar material to enhance the learning environment at CRC

Topics:

- Student characteristics, motivation, and expectations
- Best practices comparisons across the disciplines
- Creating significant learning experiences
- New approaches to teaching and course design

Materials:

- Bain, Ken, 2004, What the Best College Teachers Do, Harvard University Press, ISBN 0-674-01325-5.
- Readings from current research including excerpts from texts, online sources, and journal articles

At least one copy of all print materials will be available in CASSL and/or the CRC library.

To Register: Contact Dr. Marybeth Buechner, Seminar Facilitator, by September 1, 2007 for session 1A and by October 1, 2007 for Session 1B.

Possible Future Seminars

Cultural Competence in a Diverse College Environment

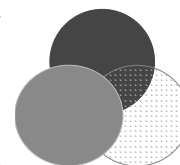
Course Design and Curriculum Development

Developing Leadership Skills

Campus Data

Educational
Research

Professional
Development



Participants can apply for salary advancement credit – ask if you need more information

YOU ARE INVITED

CASSL Seminars in Teaching and Leadership Professional seminars focused on the scholarship of teaching and leadership. Conducted as an academic seminar, the group will meet for over the course of several weeks to examine recent research, discuss readings and share best practices. Online discussion will extend the conversation for those interested. All CRC staff are welcome to participate.

Seminar 2: Our Changing Classrooms

The nuts and bolts of teaching in our diverse and changing world

Join us as we share best practices and learn about recent innovations in teaching and learning. This seminar will be useful for experienced teachers and other staff who wish to explore the scholarship of teaching, new teachers who are beginning to develop their teaching practices, and student services faculty and staff who help guide students through their learning experiences.

Two sessions – Open to 12 participants per session

Session 2A: Thursdays 1:30-3:20pm, Jan 31 – April 3

Session 2B: Tuesdays 5:00-6:00pm, March 25-May 20

Outcomes: We will...

- engage in intellectual discussions of the scholarship of teaching and learning
- increase our understanding of teaching “best practices” utilized in different disciplines
- learn about the nuts and bolts of teaching in our changing and complex 21st century classrooms
- be able to apply the seminar material to enhance the learning environment at CRC

Topics:

- Motivation, learning styles, and attention
- Using inquiry, examples, case studies, and problem solving
- Active learning techniques in the classroom
- Teaching to a diverse group of students: Background
- Teaching in diverse classrooms: strategies in various disciplines
- Using technology as a teaching tool: nuts and bolts
- Technology and academic integrity
- Assessing learning: nuts and bolts
- Assessing learning: broader implications

Materials:

The class will work with a core text and a variety of readings from online sources. The text for this semester is **Teaching at It's Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors**, 2nd edition, 2003, by Linda B. Nilson. This book focuses on the nuts and bolts of teaching methodologies and provides some background in the research supporting those methods. It has many short chapters addressing effective teaching methods.

To Register: Contact Dr. Marybeth Buechner by January 15th 2008 for session 2A and by March 15th 2008 for Session 2B. Participants can apply for salary advancement credit – ask if you need more information



CASSL NEWSLETTER

Fall 2007 Volume 1 Number 1
Center for the Advancement of Staff & Student Learning

Upcoming CASSL Events

CASSL Brown Bag Lunches: Thursdays 12:00 – 1:30 pm

- August 30 – Tips to start off the semester
- September 13 – Data Discussion
- October 11 – Discussion of the podcast from PBS “All things to all people”
- October 25 – Why do students drop classes?
- November 8 - Data Discussion
- November 29 – Adjusting to the compressed calendar

Education Research Workshops with Dr. Jeanne Edman

- Sept. 27, 2007: 1:00-2:00 pm - Culture, Body Image and Eating Attitudes.
- October 18, 1:00-2:00 pm - Self Efficacy Workshop.
- Nov. 5, 2007; 12:00-1:00 pm - Classroom Assessment Techniques.

Outcomes Dialogue – 1st and 3rd Mondays, 4-5pm CASSL

- September 17 – Overview
- October 1 - Course outcomes
- October 15 – Activity outcomes
- November 5 - Program outcomes
- November 19 – GE and College-wide outcomes
- December 3 – Looking Ahead

Educational Research Review: Info, info, everywhere, and not a drop to drink.

(Join the email CASSL discussion group to comment on this review)

A recent article from the Faculty Resource Network notes that the ubiquitous use of technological tools by our “millennial” students doesn’t mean that they have the intellectual tools to analyze data or judge the validity or reliability of the information that they obtain from the sources on the Internet (1).

Over 90% of US school children under 17 who use the Internet use it for schoolwork and many say it is the major source of research information for school reports. The millennial college students have been using the computer since they were very young; 20% have been computer users since they were 8 years old or younger. Nearly three-fourths of today’s college students use e-mail every day. (2) There can be little doubt that we have a technology focused student population, at least in some senses.

In spite of integration of technology into their everyday lives, the evidence suggests that high school and college students aren’t particularly good at evaluating the information that they find on the Internet. Trail and Gutierrez note that “With information bombarding them from all sides, students have little basis on which to judge the value of what they find nor have most of them formed the habit of critical evaluation. Many students equate typing a broad topic into a Web browser with doing research.” (1). There seems to be a substantial gap between the ability of students to access information and their ability to evaluate its accuracy or significance. [*continued on page 4*]

Notes from the Disciplines



"Philosophy"

Philosophy is the academic discipline concerned with formulating, understanding, and answering fundamental questions through the use of reason. Given its focus on the fundamental and on questions themselves, the study of Philosophy is extraordinarily useful not only to those with an interest in Philosophy per se, but to anyone interested in clear and careful thinking. In fact, Logic, the study of reasoning well, is one of Philosophy's five core subfields. Of course, Philosophy has no monopoly on insight into either fundamental questions or reasoning well. Over the millenia, it has generated many other disciplines that currently offer such insight in their own right. The Sciences, for example, emerged as specialized forms of Philosophy. During the lifetime of Isaac Newton, Physics was considered "Natural Philosophy" and is referred to as such in the title of his central work. Psychology just recently emerged from Philosophy of Mind. The scientific method can be understood as the philosophical method with an empirical twist.

Historical relationships aside, Philosophy intersects with a range of modern academic disciplines. English and Philosophy intersect at Syntax; Art and Philosophy intersect at Aesthetics. The study of Philosophy deepens and enriches the study of these areas (and vice versa). Students who take Philosophy 320 (Informal Logic), frequently report finding Mathematics and Grammar less intimidating and opaque as a result. The effect extends beyond Basic Skills; Philosophy students have amongst the highest rates of acceptance to Law School and Medical School.

Philosophy can also make substantial contributions to our personal and professional lives. Ethics (another of Philosophy's core subfields), investigates what we morally ought to do and be (distinguishable from what we are enculturated to do and be, the concerns of Sociology and Anthropology). Epistemology and Metaphysics (also core subfields of Philosophy) address, amongst so many others, questions such as "What makes information trustworthy?" and "What makes a relationship real?", questions of personal and professional interest alike. Philosophy is not only of value in its own right, but also as a tool with which to enhance and support a broad range of academic, professional, and personal endeavors.

Dr. Richard Schubert, Philosophy

Teaching & Learning Reflections



Reflections on the first year of full time teaching

I'm not new to teaching. I'm not even new to teaching at CRC. However, in May, I finished my first year as a full time faculty member at CRC in Anthropology. This past year has been quite the learning experience for me! I feel as though the roles have been reversed, and I am a student again being schooled by my mentors, committee, even students. I am the new freshman on campus, with a bag full of new notebooks, unsharpened pencils and a wide-eyed expression on my face.

As teachers, being on the other side of the desk is something we are familiar with - however, our profession doesn't make us any better students. I have taken several courses this past year to continue to learn about new teaching methodologies, and I still find myself complaining to my husband about the homework I have to complete, procrastinating and waiting until the last possible moment to complete assignments and grumbling about group members not pulling their weight. These are the same complaints I had during my undergraduate and graduate work. We often like to think that as teachers we know so much about how to be the best student, but when it comes down to it, there is a "student culture"- and it is hard to shake, regardless of ones' profession.

This first year has had quite a steep learning curve, even though, as I mentioned, I am not new to teaching nor to CRC. I can't imagine what it would have been like as a new teacher at a new school. I have a feeling that my learning will never be complete- this second year, it is learning to work on a committee. But don't worry if we are on the same committee together- I promise to pull my weight, and do my fair share of the work!!!

Amanda Wolcott-Paskey, Anthropology

If you'd like to write for "Notes" or "Reflections" contact Dr. Marybeth Buechner

**Staff Profile: Dr. Jeanne Edman,
Faculty Researcher:**

Looking for a colleague who not only is an expert teacher, but can answer your questions about how our student perceptions of themselves as learners affect their academic success? Ask Jeanne Edman.

At CRC, Dr. Edman is an integral part of the Psychology Department, the Research Office, and CASSL. She has a rich teaching resume, having taught at Kapiolani community college, the University of Hawaii Medical School and University of Hawaii School of Social Work. Here at CRC she teaches Psychology classes in General Principles, Research Methods in Psychology, Human Sexuality, and Introductory Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences. *[continued on p. 4]*

Outcomes Dialogue: Assessment, Grades, and Outcomes

What does “assessment” mean?

The word “assessment” is used in a variety of contexts and the multiple meanings can lead to some confusion. The most commonly used meanings of the term in the community college context are:

- *Diagnostic placement assessment:* Assessment of student knowledge in order to place students into specific courses. For example, we use this type of assessment to place students into Math, English, and Reading classes.
- *Summative grading assessment:* Assessment of student learning in order to arrive at grades for individual students in classes. This measures the success of individual students across the entire set of course outcomes.
- *Student outcomes assessment:* Assessment of student success on specific outcomes across the group of students as a whole. This can apply to course outcomes, program outcomes, college-wide outcomes, etc.

How is assessing course outcomes different than grading students?

When we arrive at a final grade for an individual student, we are summarizing that student’s success across all of the outcomes of the course. When we assess an individual outcome, we are

summarizing the success of the entire group of students on that one outcome. We use this information to help us figure out if we want to think about changing how we work with our students in the future. The figure below shows this graphically

**Assessing for a Grade versus
Assessing Outcomes**

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Grade
Student 1→→→	A
Student 2→→→	C
Student 3→→→	B
Student 4→→→	F
Outcome assessment	Poor success	Moderate success	High success	
	Change methods	Change methods ??	Hurray! Keep methods	

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Continued from p.1 - Ed Research: Betsy Barefoot wrote in the Jan 2006 *Chronicle of Education* that “few first year college student’s can easily distinguish fact from fiction in online and print sources, and even fewer have ever been exposed to the scholarly resources that can be found in a college or university library.” (3). A survey of California professors noted that incoming college students “cannot adequately analyze information or arguments and cannot synthesize information from multiple sources. Only a minority can evaluate online resources”. The same study found that professors indicate that only about 1/3 of entering students are sufficiently prepared to analyze or synthesize information (4).

What does this mean for CRC? CASSL invites you to participate in an email discussion of these issues – contact Dr. Marybeth Buechner to join the discussion group.

References:

- (1) Trail MA and R Stockton, 2006, *Familiarity Breeds Misconceptions? Information Technology Savvy Millennials Show Surprising Information Literacy Skill Deficits*, Network: A Journal of Faculty Development, <http://www.nyu.edu/frn/publications/millennial.student/network-journal/TOC.html>
- (2) Rainie, L, Kalchoff M, and Hess D, (2005) *Pew Internet & American Life Project* Data Memo [Online]. Cited n Trail and Gutierrez (see above)
- (3) Barefoot, B, 2006 “*Bridging the Chasm: First-Year Students and the Library.*” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 52(20) B16.
- (4) *Academic Literacy: A Statement of Competencies Expected of Students Entering California’s Public Colleges and Universities.* 2002. Intersegmental committee of the CCC Academic Senate, CSU, and UC. www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/reports/acadlit.pdf.

Continued from p.3 – Staff Profile

Dr. Edman’s Research Office and CASSL work includes research that examines the relationship between student academic success and personal variables such as a student’s perception of cultural congruity, use of student support, and sense of academic efficacy. This fall Dr. Edman will host a series of educational research workshops through CASSL. Join her in discussions of culture, body image and eating attitudes, student self efficacy, and Classroom Assessment Techniques.

Dr. Edman completed her Ph.D. at University of Hawaii at Manoa, where dissertation research in the Philippines focused on Illness perceptions among women in a rural community. She has also been a visiting scholar at the University Utara Malaysia. She has recently worked on cross cultural research on body image, eating attitudes, and exercise, among a variety of ethnic groups including Native Hawaiians, Filipinos, Chamorro, and African Americans.

CASSL Staff

- *Dr. Marybeth Buechner*, CASSL Faculty Leader
- *Dr. Jeanne Edman*, Faculty Researcher
- *Brad Brazil*, Research Analyst
- *Kathy McLain*, Dean College Planning and Research
- *Nancy Edmonson*, Administrative Assistant

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Student Success • Professional Development • Inquiry

REFLECTIONS

Fall 2007 Volume 1 Number 2
A Publication of the
Center for the Advancement of Staff & Student Learning
Dr. Marybeth Buechner, Editor

Educational Research Review: Generational Learning Differences

Ellen Arden-Ogle

(Join the email CASSL discussion group to comment on this review)

In September, I had the opportunity to attend the North/Far North lectures by Dr. Pamela Cox-Otto on *Teaching the New Student* and *Multi Generational Struggles in Our Colleges*. Her research was compelling, backed up by an impressive data set, and really pulled the light bulb chain in my brain. Her main thesis is that for the first time in the history of higher education, there are four different generations working to serve four different generations of students and that these different generations have different perspectives, contexts, and experiences that lead to conflict and what Cox-Otto calls, “creeping college crankiness.”

Her presentation, based on extensive research, went further than most research presentations; it actually made perfect sense and explained a lot about what I see in terms of student expectations and learning paradigms. In fact, it sent me right back to check out learning theories with Bandura, Knowles, and the rest of that ilk. Guess what? All learning theories are based on research done with only one generation of learners—the baby boomers. So there is no reflection of the very different contexts and expectations that the other generations grew up with. Dr. Cox-Otto asked the community college administrators and faculty present to raise their hands if they maintained a blog. Only two of us put our hands up. Then she asked how many of us made movies on our computers. One hand went up. How many composed music on their computers? One hand went up again. Finally she asked how many of us wrote reports, articles, memos, curriculum forms, etc. All the hands in the room went up. *(continued on page 5)*

In this issue:

- [Generational Learning Differences, Ellen Arden-Ogle](#)
- [The Lucky Ones - Cheri LaDue, Physical Education](#)
- [Drawing out what is within us - Colette L. Harris](#)
- [Staff Profile - Sharon Padilla-Alvarado, Tutoring Coordinator](#)
- [Shared Governance: Our Right & Our Responsibility, Gary Martin](#)
- [College-wide outcomes, Marybeth Buechner](#)

Upcoming CASSL Events

CASSL Brown Bag Lunches: Thursdays 12:00 – 1:30 pm

- November 29 – Adjusting to the compressed calendar

Outcomes Dialogue – 1st and 3rd Mondays, 4-5pm CASSL

- December 3 – Looking Ahead

Outcomes Institute – Jan 14&15, District Office training room

- Want to dialogue about how to enhance student success?
- Need a dedicated time to join with colleagues to develop outcomes, work on outcomes assessment plans or design assessment tools?

Join us to learn more about outcomes implementation and have a chance to put that training into practice by entering outcomes into SOCRATES or your program documents. Look for more information via email.

Look for other Spring '08 events in the Professional Development Booklet, which will be available at the Spring convocation.



Notes from the Disciplines The Lucky Ones - Cheri LaDue, Physical Education

Let's be honest. Those of us who work in Physical Education and Athletics are some of the luckiest people in the world. We work in an environment that is fun, competitive, and full of more ups than downs. When you really stop to think about it, we fulfill one of the most important aspects of a student's education, teaching about the importance of physical health and well being, and we try to instill habits and knowledge that will last a lifetime. All of the formal education in the world cannot replace a healthy body, mind and spirit, and it is our task to educate, motivate and encourage all of our students to make the decision to choose the path to strength and conditioning.

Our curriculum offers something for everyone, regardless of their current level of physical fitness. Aerobics, Yoga, and Walking and Jogging are perfect choices for those that want to start the process. Cardio-kickboxing, Boot Camp Fitness, and Swimming cater to those that are at a higher level of commitment. Our activity classes like Tennis, Badminton, and Indoor Soccer give students the opportunity to improve their levels of fitness in a fun and recreationally competitive environment. Those with physical disabilities can thrive in our Adapted Physical Education program. Something for everyone!

Our athletic programs continue to grow and thrive. Our coaches are dedicated professionals who instill lifelong values of teamwork, commitment, and leadership along with teaching skills and theories that take many of our athletes to the next level. Those who are not involved with athletics may not realize the impact that a coach can have on an athlete, not only on the field, but also in the classroom. Our coaches at CRC strive to make their student-athletes outstanding in the classroom as well as in their competitive arena.

So, when you see us running around campus in our shorts and sweats, realize that we know we are lucky too! We have the greatest jobs in the world, but we also spent every waking moment recruiting, competing and marketing our programs to the local area. It is not a 9-5 job; it is a passion that consumes our lives on and off campus. I encourage all of you to support the student-athletes and the coaches, attend an athletic event and see the end results of all of the countless hours that go into a season. Always keep in mind that the PEA is one of the most visible aspects of the college, and it is our job to represent Cosumnes River College in a bright and successful light.



Teaching & Learning Reflections Drawing out what is within us - Colette L. Harris, Communication

The journey of becoming a more effective community college professor prompts introspection to one's own educational foundation. Answering the call to teach requires understanding what author James Baldwin refers to as the dirty underside of any profession. The dirty underside of higher education is that everyone will not succeed here nor is everyone interested in education for the sake of expanding their intellectual capacity. With this in mind, I have a personal quest to stimulate students of all backgrounds to pursue an education. Students must be willing to acknowledge what is in them and then have it drawn out and self analyzed. An education should encourage students to seek their own truths. The etymology of the word education means to "draw out" that which is in us.

Teaching in higher education for almost 10 years has caused me to reflect and incorporate lessons learned along the way. I combine personal experiences with cultural narratives from my background in corporate America because they shape my teaching philosophy. Initially, my approach to teaching was to simply model professors that I had during my experience and apply a measurable goal approach to student learning.

Higher education has changed tremendously in 20 years. Teaching 18-22 year olds (though this is not our only demographic) and working with specific programs such as Diop Scholars allows me to examine what it means to teach this generation of students. Yes, many students have intellectually and emotionally disconnected from the educational system. Whatever happened to the love of learning? My courses are designed to discover communication theories and apply skills learned. Students must be able to see how a course connects to their current life or to life how they view it in the future.

Researchers have long espoused the idea that individuals learn aurally, visually, tactilely or from a combination of styles. Simply lecturing in class, though a more a natural mode of teaching for me, is less than interesting for this generation of learners. I have adopted a more flexible teaching style and try to meet students at their point of entry and build on student successes as the semester progresses. This does not insinuate diluting college level curriculum, but engenders students learning material they may have dismissed as uninteresting.

Teachers must be able to connect course work to student areas of interest. Students need to believe that they can integrate new information that serves to broaden their current truths. There are times that I as a teacher must allow students to teach me something new as well. This reciprocity considers the teacher as a learner. Reflecting on teaching and learning provides a history for our teaching experiences. This history is rich in developing practices relevant for future teaching innovations.



Staff Profile:

Sharon Padilla-Alvarado, Tutoring Coordinator

Sharon has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Spanish, and a M.A. in Education (Administration & Policy Analysis) from Stanford University. In addition she has completed graduate courses in Teacher Education and Counselor Education at San Diego State University and National University, as well as undergraduate courses in English and Computer Science at CRC and Sac State. She is currently enrolled in graduate courses in Education through Goucher College in Maryland

Sharon has worked in Higher Education for over 20 years including CSU (Cal Poly SLO and CSUS) and community colleges (Imperial Valley College, Woodland Community College, Folsom Lake College, and Cosumnes River College). If you'd like to talk to someone who has a wide range of experience with students, Sharon's the one; she has worked in many programs including educational equity, student activities, MESA, counseling, academic advising, tutoring, etc.

Sharon was a counselor at CRC from 1990-1997 and now coordinates the tutoring program here at CRC. She teaches the tutor training class. She developed the curriculum for CRC's Freshman Seminar Program.

Sharon has one more important tie to the campus - her son enrolled as a freshman at CRC Fall Semester 2007.

Sharon was profiled this fall in the CRC Connection, which noted that her favorite line from a movie is "Success is nothing without someone to share it with." from *The Lady Sings the Blues*. (Jaytika Nand, October 25th, 2007 edition of the CRC Connection).

You can contact Sharon at her campus email padills@crc.losrios.edu. She would love to talk about tutoring, teaching, student support, and life at CRC.



Reflections on Shared Governance

Shared Governance: Our Right & Our Responsibility - Gary Martin, CRC Academic Senate Secretary

When looking at a stack of papers to grade and then considering whether to skip your next campus committee meeting, please choose the meeting. There is a long history in higher education where the faculty and a college's administration have been combatants in the war over many aspects of education. The war, however, was won by the faculty in the area of "academic and professional matters." For the system to work, faculty must participate.

More experienced faculty forget and many newer faculty members are unaware of the hard fought battles prior to the implementation of AB 1725 and Title 5 of the California Ed Code. Under these laws, the faculty, through the Academic Senate, has primacy in such important issues as grading policies, curriculum, prerequisites and the granting of degrees. The faculty's role in budget development, student preparation and success, and the faculty role in accreditation and professional staff development is just as important. This process only works, however, when all the players come to the table.

Cosumnes River College has a well-established system of committees that advise the Academic Senate and the college president on how the college should be run and on how best to serve students. Joint decision making that involves input from professors, administrators, classified staff and students creates a thriving culture where ideas can be shared and buy-in from all the participants is sought.

This system falters in the absence of a shared discussion. CRC President Francisco Rodriguez has declared his process many times: "A-C-B-D. Always Consult Before Deciding." This spirit of informing his decisions means that effected parties have input. While not everyone will always like or approve of a decision, at the very least, they can know their opinions were heard and understood.

As Cosumnes River College this year prioritizes its future instructional purchases through the COB and ITMB budgeting process, as it takes preliminary steps toward next year's accreditation self-study, and as it takes on critical issues surrounding the compressed calendar, basic skills and the assessment of course-and-program level Student Learning Outcomes, all faculty and staff are encouraged to accept both the right and the responsibility to participate in the process of helping make Cosumnes River College the very best place it can be.



Outcomes Dialogue: College-wide outcomes Marybeth Buechner, CASSL

A couple of years ago, the CRC Academic Senate approved a statement of our goals for our students – college-wide student learning outcomes. As we move forward, we may wish to revisit these ideas, either to affirm or to revise them. What do you think?

Area 1: Graduation competencies

Students will experience an academically rigorous learning environment that challenges them to develop the critical verbal, written, and quantitative skills needed to analyze complex issues.

As the result of a variety of learning experiences, students will be able to:

- a. Use quantitative reasoning (e.g. mathematics) to solve problems.
- b. Express ideas and facts clearly and completely in a variety of written formats.
- c. Comprehend and analyze written material and evaluate arguments from reading material.
- d. Speak and listen critically and recognize the value of a wide range of communication styles.
- e. Use the English language proficiently.

Area 2: General education

Students completing any of the GE patterns will develop an understanding of the basic concepts and major modes of inquiry used in a variety of disciplines.

As the result of a variety of learning experiences, students will be able to:

- a. Articulate an awareness of a variety of disciplinary perspectives and the relevance of these perspectives to one's own life.
- b. Correctly utilize the basic vocabulary of several disciplines.
- c. Utilize, at a basic level, the tools of inquiry and information acquisition of several disciplines.
- d. Demonstrate the intellectual skills, creative capabilities, values, and attitudes that will make them effective learners and citizens.
- e. Demonstrate an awareness of the connections between disciplines.

Area 3: Program completion

Students completing a degree, disciplinary transfer program, or certificate will develop a depth of understanding, including critical cognitive, psychomotor

and affective skills, in at least one discipline (transfer or occupational).

As the result of a variety of learning experiences, students will be able to:

- a. Use of the modes of analysis and critical thinking in the major discipline of study as applied to significant problems.
- b. Communicate a complex understanding of content matter of the major discipline of study.
- c. Demonstrate competence in the skills essential to mastery of the major discipline of study.
- d. Use information resources to gather discipline-specific information.
- e. Explain the importance the major discipline of study in the broader picture of society.

Area 4: Student development as self-reliant learners

Students will make progress toward becoming engaged and self-reliant learners demonstrating habits of intellectual inquiry and striving toward their maximum potential.

As the result of a variety of learning experiences, students will be able to:

- a. Actively engage in intellectual inquiry beyond that required in order to pass classes.
- b. Identify personal goals and pursue those goals effectively.
- c. Confidently seek out the information and resources needed to develop academically and personally.
- d. Incorporate what is learned at school into daily life and use this information to make positive personal, educational and career choices.
- e. Utilize skills from the "academic tool kit" including time management, study skills, etc.
- f. Be actively involved in campus life and express a sense of engagement with the campus culture.

Area 5: Society, ethics and pluralism

Students will become more prepared to contribute to a diverse democratic society with a pluralistic perspective of the world.

As the result of a variety of learning experiences, students will be able to:

- a. Participate in the larger community beyond campus in a positive manner demonstrating an understanding of personal responsibility in the larger context.
- b. Undertake thoughtful consideration of divergent points of view and utilize multiple perspectives in considering information.
- c. Develop a foundation for cultural pluralism, a rejection of previous personal prejudices, and knowledge of and comfort with others unlike themselves.
- d. Recognize the ethical dimensions of decisions and actions as well as demonstrate the ability to engage in the ethical

reasoning necessary to exercise responsibility as an ethical individual, professional, local, and global citizen

e. Demonstrate civility, empathy, interpersonal competence, social responsibility, and peaceful conflict resolution.

Continued from p.1 - Ed Research (Ellen Arden-Ogle):

“You’re not good at the new technology your younger students are using,” said Cox-Otto, “and they are not good at your technology—writing.” Cox-Otto has summarized research on the expectations of different generations of learners: I highlighted the Tools row because the contrast of preferred tools by each generation is so startling. It also took me an entire day to figure out that “ttul8r” in the Generation Y Love cell means “talk to you later” (in my defense I got the “you later” part but took me ages to decode it as “talk to”). My problems in decoding the one short phrase highlight some of the potential future problem. If we are to be multigenerational decoders of messages, particularly written messages, then constant updating and continuous technological learning is going to be necessary.

Teaching Differences	Boomers Born 1946-1964 80 Million	X’ers Born 1965-1980 46 Million	Y’ers Born 1980-2002 76 Million
Want from education	Ideas	Practicality	Freedom
Life is...	Competitive, so be ready to fight for what you want	Cruel and Unfair, so be ready to take the money and run	Dangerous without friends & family, so stay close
Classroom	I memorized the book.	Why should I know this I can look it up?	I’m looking it up now.
Tools	Books & Writing (Often by hand)	Books & Digital (email) Writing (on the computer)	Digital-music, video, blog, IM, TM Why should I write when I can blog?
Approach	Show me something that makes me think	Show me something that works - Practicality is critical	Show me something that is cool
Timing	Ready when you are, sir/ma’am.	Burger King Generation: I want it my way.	I’m ready now, can I have it now? Oops, too late, how ‘bout tomorrow, can I have it tomorrow?
Motivation	Keep getting better	Portable Career	Flexible Career Options
Reward	Power/Respect	Flexibility	Fun
Love...	Deep discussions on What is possible and what it means F2F	Asynchronous Communication in short bursts	ttul8r, Two-fers Groups
Hate...	Groups	F2F Groups	F2F with you

Seeking Contributions to the next REFLECTIONS publication!

We are looking for contributions to future editions of REFLECTIONS, a periodic publication of CRC CASSL. In particular we are looking for:

- Essays for “Notes from the Disciplines”
- Essays for “Teaching and Learning Reflections”
- Reviews and reports of “Education Research”
- Outcomes dialogue -

(Essays, reviews, and commentary should be approximately 250 – 500 words in length)

CASSL Staff

- Dr. Marybeth Buechner, CASSL Faculty Leader
- Dr. Jeanne Edman, Faculty Researcher
- Brad Brazil, Research Analyst
- Kathy McLain, Dean of College Planning and Research
- Nancy Edmonson, Administrative Assistant

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<i>Brice Harris, Chancellor</i>	

REFLECTIONS

Spring 2008 Volume 1 Number 3
 A Publication of the
 Center for the Advancement of Staff & Student Learning
 Marybeth Buechner, Editor

Educational Research Review:

(Join the email CASL discussion group to comment on this review)

Why students drop classes: Summary of a pilot study **M. Buechner**

During Fall Semester 2007 a group of CRC faculty from Humanities, English, Math, and Physical Education worked with CASL on a pilot study of why students drop classes. From week 4 to week 12 of the semester, students who dropped the classes in the pilot study were called and asked if they would explain why they dropped the class, if they had talked to a teacher, counselor or coach before dropping, if they planned to take the class again, and if there was anything CRC could have done to help them stay in the class. A total of 112 students were called and 44 students were contacted and responded. The following table summarizes the reasons that students gave for dropping a class *(Percents add to more than 100% as some students listed multiple reasons for dropping)*

	Reason for dropping the class
2%	Financial problems
2%	time needed for a social life
2%	cost of school (fees, books, etc.)
2%	didn't have the prerequisites for the class
9%	Schedule wasn't convenient
11%	transportation problems
11%	class didn't fit educational goals
14%	health issues
16%	family responsibilities
16%	class was too hard
18%	overall class workload was too large
18%	teaching methods were not effective
32%	work responsibilities

Continued on p. 4

In this Issue:

- Why Students Drop Classes: Summary of a pilot study. M. Buechner...p.1
- What Do the Best College Teachers Do? F. Rodriguez...p.2
- Disciplines Dialogue, CASL Innovation Grant Projects...p.2
- Staff Profile: Isiah Badrue...p. 3
- Outcomes dialogue: OATF, D. Wassmer...p.3

Upcoming CASL Events

CASL Brown Bag Lunches:

Wednesday 12:00 – 1:30 pm

- Feb 27 - The Latest from the Research Office
- March 5 – Strategies for teaching diverse groups of students
- March 26 – Innovation Grants
- April 2 – Update from the Outcomes Assessment Task Force

CASL Seminar in Teaching and Learning

- Session 2B, Tuesdays 5:00-6:00pm in CASL plus one hour per week online. (There's still room to join this section of the seminar)

CASL Institute – May 2008

CASL Colloquium – August 2008

Look for more information soon!



Notes from the Disciplines

What our colleagues are up to: CASSL Innovation Grant projects in various disciplines

Anthropology: Anastasia Panagakos and Amanda Wolcott Paskey are researching the effectiveness of hands-on activities in Cultural Anthropology classes. They will complete a classroom based research study and produce a student workbook.

Art: Margaret Woodcock will be working to develop a process of outcomes assessment for creative arts departments. She will gather information and lead her department in implementing strategies for SLO implementation and related planning processes.

Counseling: Lynn Fowler is undertaking a study of why students fail to utilize priority registration times. She will develop statistics that will allow us to better understand this behavior and to find strategies that will help students register in a more effective manner.

English: Matthew Abergel and Linda Sneed are working on research into the effective teaching of writing in non-Composition classes. They will be conducting interviews, focus groups and surveys. The goal is to find ways to support faculty across the college assigning and assessing student writing in their classes.

Library: Marjorie Schreiber will be studying issues related to the impact of textbook costs the ways in which Library Course Reserves could be used to address this problem. She will review what is being done at other colleges and survey CRC students and faculty.

Math: Camille Moreno and Kimberly Williams-Brito are examining the implementation of the “Math Academy” model at CRC. This includes strategies to increase student success in math courses, especially among African American and Latino students.

Radio, TV, and Film Production: BJ Snowden will be exploring the expectations of adult learners as they begin their work as CRC students. He will be conducting a literature review and focus groups to identify effective practices to meet the needs of adult learners at CRC.

Student Government and Leadership: Winnie LaNier is conducting a broad review of existing Leadership programs in community colleges, and how those programs articulate with the CSU and UC systems. The goal is the development of a culturally proficient Leadership program at CRC.



Teaching & Learning Reflections

What Do the Best College Teachers Do? Francisco C. Rodriguez, CRC President

During the last winter holidays, my son, Andres, got his best set of college grades to date. Finally, I thought, my long-winded father-son lectures about managing his time, improving his study skills and staying focused had taken hold. These themes were surely resonating with him as he matured; it was all now starting to make sense to him. Proud of his success, I asked him what made the difference this time, hoping to receive perhaps a minor nod of affirmation for my previously dispatched pearls of wisdom. His response was clear and immediate, “Dad, I had some really great professors.”

So, what makes a great professor? As I probed my son for clues through our extended conversation, I recognized the behaviors that are descriptive of the best college teachers. The best college teachers are extremely knowledgeable of their discipline, facilitate demanding and intellectually rigorous lectures, discussions and assignments, maintain high expectations for student learning in an environment marked by care and trust, and have in place a systematic feedback loop that allows them to check for learning.

While Andres didn’t describe his experiences using the words I have, he did describe the behaviors of his professors in this way and how positive he felt about being in the class. Through their enthusiasm, his professors made him want to learn and apply the material, in and out of class. As importantly, he became more responsible for his own learning and discovered the joy of it.

Ken Bain, author of, *What the Best College Teachers Do*, would agree. Bain drew on the experiences and techniques of college and university professors who have been described as “the best.” He discovered that it is not what teachers do, *it is what they understand*. The best college teachers understand how their students learn, create meaningful assignments, evaluate what they and their students do, and integrate that feedback into future classes. What sets the best teachers apart is a combination of believing that students can succeed, providing challenging activities to demonstrate learning, offering encouragement, and caring to learn about their students as people. The best professors value human learning; they firmly believe that teaching matters and that students can learn.

No matter how sage I believe my advice is to my own son, I cannot compete, nor do I wish to, with his professors’ powerful influence on him and how they make him feel about the process of learning. And they have done so while maintaining high standards of excellence and a high ethic of care. Now that is what I describe as a higher education. References: Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.



Staff Profile:

Isiah Badrue, Adjunct Business Professor

If you have a chance, spend some time talking to Isiah Badrue, an adjunct business professor here at CRC. He has degrees in engineering and in management, has lived in a variety of countries, has experiences in many cultures and religions, and has found that teaching at the community college is his passion.

Isiah is from Nigeria, where he lived until he was about 18 years old when he left home and traveled to England, France, and Italy to pursue an education. He soon came to US, where he had family members and spoke the language (English is one of the languages commonly spoken in Nigeria). He lived in Maryland, Virginia and Georgia, completed his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering at Devry University’s Atlanta campus and was hired by Intel. He earned a second Masters in Human Resource Management at Golden Gate University here in California.

Recently Isiah began teaching at CRC, where he teaches “Introduction to Business” and “Managing Diversity in the Workplace” and works with the students in the Work Experience program. He teaches similar classes at the Sacramento campus of Devry University as well as one other, quite unexpected, class – Comparative Religions. He was offered a chance to teach that class because of his unusually diverse background – His mother is Christian, his father is a Muslim and many of the people he grew up around in Nigeria practiced the indigenous religions of the area. He feels a connection to all of these viewpoints.

When asked why he wants to make teaching at CRC his career he replies that “All along I knew I wanted to teach. As I was sitting there listening to professors as a student, I thought I’d like to teach. At Intel I was the ‘go to guy’ for training and professional development courses and volunteered to teach those courses. My human resources degree is about helping people. I found that I can do this through education that I have a niche here”. To Isiah, teaching is more than just imparting knowledge about the discipline. He notes that “when I look to the CRC students I realize that I have to do more than just teach them the material; I have to bring with me all the experiences and tools to help them unlock their potential. I work to teach them life lessons as well as the textbook.” He finds himself helping students with resumes, the transfer process, and life in general. He notes that in his job, “the rewards can’t be measured by monetary income, but by being able to touch someone’s life”.



Outcomes Dialogue:

Outcomes Assessment Task Force (OATF), Dana Wassmer

What is Outcomes Assessment?

Outcomes assessment refers to student learning outcomes (or SLOs). It is the process of how we evaluate student success on specific outcomes across the class as a whole. There are many ways this can be done: item analyses of exams, homework, or assignments linked specifically to a SLO, portfolio analyses, capstone projects, rubrics, student surveys, and even direct observation of psychomotor skills. In other words, it is what we have been doing all along, used in a different way.

What Are the Benefits of Outcomes Assessment?

We all want to be the best that we can be. We all want our students to be successful. Outcomes Assessment will assist us in achieving these goals. By reviewing the results of our outcomes assessments, we can begin dialogue with our colleagues on how we can improve the course or lesson or service we provide. This may lead to a change in the curriculum, teaching practices, resources, or staffing. Most importantly, it makes us more effective at what we do.

What is the Outcomes Assessment Task Force?

The Outcomes Assessment Task Force was appointed by the Academic Senate last spring. The committee charge is to develop a set of strategies and tools that can be used to document the assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, and college level. Our goal is not to reinvent the wheel nor is it to drastically change the way we currently teach or provide services. We value academic freedom and our campus culture. We strive to develop outcomes assessment strategies and tools that are in support of our values as well as being useful and be easy to implement. We realize that many of us are already conducting outcomes assessments. We want to recognize and formalize those efforts.

Who Are We?

Pat Blacklock	Jeanne Edman	Travis Parker
Brad Brazil	Dave Hodapp	Rich Shintaku
Marybeth Buechner	Estella Hoskins	Dana Wassmer
Cori Burns	Kathy McLain	Norv Wellsfry
Dan DuBray	Sue Palm	Margaret Woodcock

In other words, we are you. The task force is composed of representatives from management, faculty from a variety of different disciplines, vocational education, research, counseling, and even accreditation. We want to give a voice to your interests and concerns throughout the whole process.

Continued from p.1 – Ed. Research

Reasons for dropping were widely distributed over the entire period of the study. For example, work responsibilities impacted students in each of the 8 weeks of the study. The following reasons occurred in at least 5 of the 8 weeks: work responsibilities, teaching methods, overall class workload, health issues, and transportation problems. Only one factor reported by at least 5 students showed a different pattern; students for whom the class did not fit their educational goals dropped before week 6 of the semester. These results, showing that work responsibilities is the most common factor for dropping classes, are similar to those reported previously Sigworth, 1995; Conklin 1997, Summer 2001; Mery, 2001)

A relatively low percentage (16-18%) of the respondents reported class-related reasons for dropping (class too hard, overall class workload for the semester too large, or teaching methods not effective). Another 11% dropped because the class didn't fit their educational goals. Only 25% of the student respondents indicated that they had spoken with a teacher, counselor or coach before dropping the class. No respondent indicated that the college could have definitely done something to prevent the drop, and only three respondents indicated that "maybe" the college could have done something to help. Approximately 57% of the respondents indicated that they planned to take the class again within the next year.

Examples of some student comments (paraphrased to protect identifying information):

- o Teacher didn't teach the way he learned; but "not a bad teacher".
- o Didn't want to take public bus that late in the evening. May not need to take the class again

References

- Conklin, K. A. 1997. Course Attrition: A 5-year perspective on why students drop classes. Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 21 (8): 753-759.
- Mery P .M.. 2001. Students Leaving before Census. Survey Series, Spring 2000. City College of San Francisco, CA. Office of Institutional Development, Research, and Planning. http://www.ccsf.cc.ca.us/Services/Research_Planning.
- Sigworth, D. 1995. Student Withdrawal Study, Schoolcraft College. Schoolcraft College Research Report.
- Summer, P. 2001. Drop Study/Attrition Rates, Fall 2000. Office of Institutional Research, Johnson County Community College Research Report.

- o Work schedule changed - works in retail. Has to choose between work and school; has had to drop all classes
- o Respiratory problem, doctor wouldn't clear student for class
- o "Great teacher" but couldn't retain info; loud students were distracting. Sad that it didn't work out.
- o Death in the family; had to move out of Sacramento
- o Took this class as a second choice, but was able to get into the class that was a first choice for student's interests
- o Late signing up for classes, class didn't fit schedule, was too early - couldn't wake up
- o Sick for a couple of weeks tried to email teacher, but email seemed to be down
- o Didn't have the prerequisite; talked to counselor and everything was worked out
- o Didn't need the class; signed up for it by mistake
- o Spouse took lower paying job, had to go back to work.
- o Couldn't understand the professor, the way professor talked and words used.
- o Job takes up time frame.
- o Parents separating so needed to work full time to help mother with household finances
- o Got the flu and got too far behind
- o Works full time and had to drop classes "situations always pop up" at student's house.
- o Couldn't afford all the books, had to drop 3 classes
- o Took Math and English in same semester - too much
- o Student was promoted and is now working 12 hour days.
- o Bookstore ran out of book. Was falling behind from the beginning. Homework was excessive.
- o Student was behind; 3 hours is too long
- o Commute was too long
- o Had to leave the state
- o Stressed out, couldn't keep up. Financial Aid issues
- o Didn't like teacher; didn't think the grading was fair.
- o Construction going on in house, family had to move to a motel that was far away.
- o Turned in two papers and got bad grades on them; didn't see the point of continuing.
- o Didn't like the class, too much reading

<p>CASSL Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dr. Marybeth Buechner</i>, CASSL Faculty Leader • <i>Dr. Jeanne Edman</i>, Faculty Researcher • <i>Brad Brazil</i>, Research Analyst • <i>Kathy McLain</i>, Dean College Planning and Research • <i>Nancy Edmonson</i>, Administrative Assistant

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<i>Brice Harris, Chancellor</i>	



Why do students drop classes: Summary of a pilot study

M. Buechner, Jan 2008

During Fall Semester 2007 a group of CRC faculty from Humanities, English, Math, and Physical Education worked with CASSL on a pilot study of why students drop classes. From week 4 to week 12 of the semester, students who dropped the classes in the pilot study were called and asked if they would explain why they dropped the class, if they had talked to a teacher, counselor or coach before dropping, if they planned to take the class again, and if there was anything CRC could have done to help them stay in the class. A total of 112 students were called and 44 students were contacted and responded.

The following table summarizes the reasons that students gave for dropping a class (*Note: Percents add to more than 100% as some students listed multiple reasons for dropping*):

%	Reason for dropping the class
2	financial problems
2	time needed for a social life
2	cost of school (fees, books, etc.)
2	didn't have the prerequisites for the class
9	schedule wasn't convenient
11	transportation problems
11	class didn't fit educational goals
14	health issues
16	family responsibilities
16	class was too hard
18	overall class workload was too large
18	teaching methods were not effective
32	work responsibilities

These reasons for dropping were widely distributed over the entire period of the pilot study. For example, work responsibilities impacted students in each of the 8 weeks of the study period. The following reasons occurred in at least 5 of the 8 weeks: work responsibilities, teaching methods, overall class workload, health issues, and transportation problems. Only one factor reported by at least 5 students showed a different pattern; students for whom the class did not fit their educational goals dropped before week 6 of the semester.

These results, showing that work responsibilities is the most common factor for students dropping classes, are similar to some that have been reported previously. For example, in a study at Schoolcraft College in Michigan Sigworth (1995) reported that the main reasons for students dropping included personal or family reasons, working too many hours, job schedule changes and dissatisfaction with instruction. Work conflicts and personal problems were the most frequently cited reasons for dropping classes at Johnson Community College in Kansas (Conklin 1997, Summer 2001). City College of San Francisco reports that the most common reason given for dropping classes was work schedule conflict (Mery, 2001)

A relatively low percentage (16-18%) of the respondents reported class-related reasons for dropping (class too hard, overall class workload for the semester too large, or teaching methods not effective). Another 11% dropped because the class didn't fit their educational goals. Only 25% of the student respondents indicated that they had spoken with a teacher, counselor or coach before dropping the class. No respondent indicated that the college could have definitely done something to prevent the drop, and only three respondents indicated that "maybe" the college could have done something to help. Approximately 57% of the respondents indicated that they planned to take the class again within the next year.

A summary of some student comments (paraphrased to protect identifying information):

- Class was too early in the morning; had only had 10 minutes between classes; that wasn't enough time to clean up and relax before next class.
- Teacher didn't teach the way he learned; but "not a bad teacher".
- Didn't want to take public bus that late in the evening. May not need to take the class again
- Work schedule changed - works in retail. Has to choose between work and school; has had to drop all classes 4 times
- Respiratory problem, doctor wouldn't clear student for class
- "Great teacher" but couldn't retain info; loud students were distracting. Sad that it didn't work out.
- Death in the family; had to move out of Sacramento
- Took this class as a second choice, but was able to get into the class that was a first choice for student's interests
- Late signing up for classes, class didn't fit schedule, was too early - couldn't wake up
- Realized this class was too much, too physical; class was a lot of fun
- Had enough PE units so didn't need the class
- Sick for a couple of weeks tried to email teacher, but email seemed to be down
- Didn't have the prerequisite; talked to counselor and everything was worked out
- Just move to area and still adjusting; had time management issue.
- Working full time and school full time. Had the feeling the class was going to be too much.
- Didn't need the class; signed up for it by mistake
- Spouse took lower paying job, had to go back to work. Dropped all classes
- Couldn't understand the professor, the way professor talked and words used.
- Job takes up time frame.
- Car accident left student with transport problem. Parents separating so needed to work full time to help mother with household finances
- Thought that could juggle work and school but not able to, time issue
- Got the flu and got too far behind
- Works full time and had to drop classes "situations always pop up" at student's house
- Time issues
- Couldn't afford all the books, had to drop 3 classes
- Took Math and English in same semester and it was too much
- Student was promoted at work and is now working 12 hour days.
- Bookstore ran out of book. Was falling behind from the beginning. Homework was excessive.
- Student was behind; 3 hours is too long
- Commute was too long
- Had to leave the state
- Falling behind
- Commuting a problem; unfair pop quizzes; a lot of homework
- Stressed out, couldn't keep up. Financial Aid issues
- Didn't like teacher; didn't think the grading was fair.
- Wasn't ready
- Construction going on in house, family had to move to a motel that was far away.
- Teacher would teach "two lessons per class"; too much, very rusty in math.
- Turned in two papers and got bad grades on them; didn't see the point of continuing.
- Didn't like the class, too much reading

References

- Conklin, K. A. 1997. Course Attrition: A 5-year perspective on why students drop classes. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 21 (8): 753-759.
- Mery P .M.. 2001. Students Leaving before Census. Survey Series, Spring 2000. City Coll. of San Francisco, CA. Office of Institutional Development, Research, and Planning. http://www.ccsf.cc.ca.us/Services/Research_Planning.
- Sigworth, D. 1995. Student Withdrawal Study, Schoolcraft College. Schoolcraft College Research Report.
- Summer, P. 2001. Drop Study/Attrition Rates, Fall 2000. Office of Institutional Research, Johnson County Community College Research Report.

Sample email strings from the CRC CASSL Discussion Group

(arranged by year and by topic)

Definition of a “Community of Scholars” – Feb 08

At a recent CASSL Discussion we talked about the culture of scholarship. Near the end of the discussion we asked ourselves how we would explain to our students what we meant by a “community of scholars”. See below for our rough draft ideas...

Dear students,

CRC is a community of scholars; this means that...

- o We seek personal growth through thinking, discussing, observing, listening, questioning, and developing self awareness...
- o We appreciate what it is that we know and understand, but also come to recognize that there is a great deal that we don't yet know.
- o We are engaging ideas, making connections, and expressing creativity.

What do you think? Edit away!

Dear Colleagues,

Please see my proposed edits in **green** below.

Respectfully,

Markus Geissler

I added another bullet ...

Marlo McClurg-MacKinnon

Dear students,

CRC is a community of scholars; this means that...

- o We seek personal growth through thinking, discussing, observing, listening, questioning, actualizing, and developing self awareness...
- o We appreciate what ~~it is that~~ we know and understand, but we also come to recognize that there is a great deal that we don't yet know.
- We are engaging ideas, making connections, and expressing creativity.
- We embrace open discussion and debate in our attempt to understand and respect ideas different from our own

Dear Colleagues -

Now that we have talked about what it means to **be** a community of scholars, here is your chance to join **in** a community of scholars! **Perceptions: A Reading & Discussion Group** will discuss the emergence of the Communist Party in 20th century China on Thursday, February 28 from 3:00-4:30pm in the SOC Conference Room.

Ann Rothschild, who has recently returned from a visit to China, will be leading the conversation.

Late arrivals and early departures are welcome! If you, or your students, are interested in attending this talk, please respond to this email.

I look forward to learning with you!

Maureen Moore

The timing on this discussion is very interesting. I'm teaching ENGWR 300, and had decided to begin the semester with readings on education to help students to develop a sense of scholarship principles, academic discourse, and such that will inform our work throughout the course.

I'm teaching out of Michael Austin's *Reading the World: Ideas That Matter*. We began with the following readings in my class discussion:

Al-Ghazālī, *Manners to be Observed by Teachers and Students*, pp 463-468

Plato, *Allegory of the Cave*, pp 447-453

Jean-Jacques Rousseau *from Emile, or On Education*, pp 479-489 An additional reading from Paulo Freire's essay on the Banking Method of Education was offered for extra credit.

Discussing these readings (and looking, too, to a number of other very interesting essays from this chapter of the text) brought up a number of very interesting ideas on the topic:

- 1) All three of the writers seemed to agree that a good academic environment involved a significant degree of discomfort--disorientation, awkwardness, struggle, and such seem to be intrinsic to the discourse
- 2) Rousseau makes a very interesting distinction between what he describes as "public" learning and "private" learning--in his essay, the distinction is between learning we need in order to work better in a community vs. that we need in order to meet our own individual needs. He argues that Plato's Republic is definitive on public learning, but that the best learning process will effectively integrate both forms of learning.
- 3) There are a number of important --I think of them as "tensions" or balancing issues--that characterize academic discourse. These include: Individual v.s group needs, student needs vs. teacher needs, understanding vs. expression, familiar vs. unfamiliar, conformity vs. innovation, complexity vs. simplicity, generalization v.s specificity, etc.

I appreciate that the list we have come up with seems to address all these issues at some level or another.
Mark Springer

Unequal access to economic mobility – Feb 08

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/11_blackwhite_isaacs.aspx

The link above goes to the executive summary of a report from the Brookings Institution showing that race matters in terms of improving economic status from generation to generation. An excerpt is shown below: **Economic Mobility of Black and White Families** [Economic Mobility](#), [Children & Families](#) [Julia B. Isaacs](#), Child and Family Policy Fellow, [Economic Studies](#) Economic Mobility Project, This report, by Julia Isaacs of The Brookings Institution, reviews overall income trends based on Census Bureau data and provides an intergenerational analysis based on a longitudinal data set that allows a direct match of the family income of parents in the late 1960s to their children's family income in the late 1990s to early 2000s.¹

In brief, trends show that median family incomes have risen for both black and white families, but less so for black families. Moreover, the intergenerational analysis reveals a significant difference in the extent to which parents are able to pass their economic advantages onto their children. Whereas children of white middle-income parents tend to exceed their parents in income, a majority of black children of middle-income parents fall below their parents in income and economic status. These findings are provided in more detail below.

The link below goes to a related page from National Public Radio where you can find a podcast and blog about this subject.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18576278>

Question: What are we doing as a college that may help reverse this disturbing trend?

This report legitimizes our efforts as a college to incorporate cultural competence in our teaching and the importance of programs like Diop Scholars. Economic mobility is directly correlated to education. Our efforts to educate all students are important, however, because community college is the gateway for many students of diverse backgrounds we must make a concerted effort to provide education opportunities that support students who are underrepresented and underserved.

This is not to say that economic mobility is the sole reason behind education. Education offers our students options to explore worlds and options that may have previously been unopened. This report makes similar observations to a report released by the PewResearch Center: Optimism about Black Progress Declines: Blacks see Growing Values Gap Between Poor and Middle Class(<http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/Race.pdf>) .Political pundit Juan Williams has commented on this report extensively on NPR.

Colette Harris

We have reversed this disturbing trend in our family by having two children who have chosen the performing arts for their careers. If you wish to do this you will find that they will load up on 1099's and wind up paying self employment tax on their working poor incomes. They will have perfect driving records because they won't be able to afford cars. They will spend their money paying back student loans and their health insurance premiums. They will live with friends, network everyday and work like crazy when the opportunity arises. They will also have accolades and honors if they perform well, and these intrinsic rewards will motivate them to hang in there, happy as clams with proud parents to boot.

Did you really want the children of white families to achieve less economically than their parents?

Chris Wagner

The Myth of First-Year Enlightenment Feb 08

<http://chronicle.com/temp/email2.php?id=yJBtYjc2tfQwBnttgw2qDmRjQK3mVZGk>

This link goes to an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education that reviews a new book about the intellectual lives of college freshmen. Follow the link soon as access for folks who don't subscribe to the Chronicle will only be available for a few days. The book is by Tim Clydesdale: *The First Year Out: Understanding American Teens After High School* (University of Chicago Press, 2007). Excerpts from the review: Clydesdale interviewed a large sample of teenagers during their senior year at New Jersey High School, and then interviewed them again -- asking questions about their identities, values, religious and political views, and more -- at the end of their first year of college. (He supplemented his interviews at his primary field site with dozens more interviews at different high schools and colleges.) He hoped to discover the extent to which freshman year affected students....

"Most of the mainstream American teens I spoke with neither liberated themselves intellectually nor broadened themselves socially during their first year out," he writes. "What teens actually focus on during the first year out is this: daily life management."

In other words, freshmen spend most of their time and intellectual energy figuring out how to handle life without parental restraints and support: how to deal with money (or lack thereof); negotiate newfound freedoms with sex, drugs, and alcohol; and determine how much time to devote to studying, working, and playing. But what freshmen don't do during their first year of college comes as more of a (perhaps depressing) surprise: "Most American teens keep core identities in an 'identity lockbox' during their first year out and actively resist efforts to examine their self-understandings through classes or to engage their humanity through institutional efforts such as public lectures, the arts, or social activism."

Put more succinctly: "Contemporary teens are practical men and women. They . . . manage their daily lives fairly well. But they are not, by and large, thinking men and women."

MB

I suspect that this would not surprise Maslow.

Steve Leake

This is very interesting! In some ways, not very surprising. I wonder how different the results would be if he were to follow-up again, say at the end of two years (or at the baccalaureate degree-granting schools, after four). I think that first year is spent in just plain adjusting.

Judy Beachler

It has been my experience that most people that display the curiosity of the greater meaning of life do so long before college. Also, with more and more people attending college to be able to find jobs that will earn them more than minimum wage, not all students are seeking enlightenment, just a decent paycheck.

Lisa Van De Velde

Marybeth, et al;

What you describe has been looked at in Anthropology since the 1930's. Sometimes referred to as cultural neoteny, it looks at how societies deliberately delay allowing members to become adults past the time of physical adulthood. There were a number of hypotheses proposed as to why this would happen, but most seemed to center on the level of technology and the increased amount of time necessary to learn how to become a functioning adult. What is interesting to me about all this is that as the age of social adulthood has been increasing, the age at which the physical adulthood process starts has been decreasing. So teachers have to do with students who are restricted in their social identity, but have had a longtime awareness of their physical selves....AND we want them to sit still and take notes. HmMMM.

Alanson (Lanny) Hertzberg

Lisa,

You're right; many students are seeking a decent paycheck, rather than "enlightenment". The irony is that, these days, "enlightenment" is (almost without exception) the necessary means to that decent paycheck. As it is often put, "Thinking is the most valuable skill in a post-industrial economy..."

Consider the example of Philosophy; surely the quintessential discipline representing the alleged divergence of "enlightenment" and "paycheck". The New York Times article "Philosophers Find the Degree Pays off in Life and in Work" reports that "philosophy majors are increasingly successful in the world in which business and government depend more and more on abstract reasoning abilities." At Techforce 2000, a meeting of our region's high-tech employers and educators, local employers emphasized the importance in their hiring decisions of applicants' abstract reasoning skills, citing the rate at which specific technical training becomes outdated, while abstract reasoning skills retain their value. The New York Times Career Planner reports that "Philosophy is one fundamental area of study that has found a new role in the high-tech world".

Our students would do well to understand that the "unenlightened" are easily replaced domestically and, in many cases, with increasing frequency, more cheaply replaced by workers overseas.

Best,

Rick

Learning Math – March 08

http://www.insidehighered.com/views/blogs/confessions_of_a_community_college_dean/liveblogging_the_league_iii_stems_and_roots

The above link goes to an article about issues surrounding math education...the comments are perhaps more interesting than the article, by the way. Check it out.

MB

Excerpt: It's a tricky issue, since the roots run deep. Obviously, there's a major national failing in the way math and science are taught in high schools and earlier. Certainly, we need to take good hard looks at how we remediate math, and how we teach those intro level classes. (And when did 'college algebra' come to exist? I thought algebra was a high school course.) But that said, there's still something discomfiting about knowing that arguments based on a need for more STEM grads often wind up supporting the creation of more English majors. Even outside of STEM majors, one of the major drivers of attrition is the inability to pass the required gen ed math classes. Since even English and Art majors have to take at least *some* math, an unsuccessful early math sequence has consequences across the curriculum.

Just as a corollary to this discussion, there was a wonderful article in this week's "New Yorker" about the way the brain processes numbers and where in the brain this happens. I believe the article was titled Numbers Man

and the author was Jim _____ . I was so taken with it that I photocopied it for a couple of friends. If you can manage to get a hold of it, it is a fresh and optimistic look at how to teach math and why based on neuroscience.
Patricia Wall

My wife and I will be running a Math/Science camp for kids in Belize this summer, so I find many of your comments fascinating and the article in the New Yorker intriguing. With regards to teaching mathematics before college however, I think some comments indicate that people may be unaware of what is actually being taught K-12. Algebra is NOT introduced in high school, but in fact both algebra and geometry are introduced in second grade and students are doing simple equations by fifth grade. I know this because that is what my wife teaches, and she does it well. Elementary school children are taught problem solving, relationships, unknowns and formulas starting in second grade as part of the mandated California curriculum. How well it is taught or rather how well it is learned is certainly a problem. Blaming previous teaching for our students' attitudes towards math ignores a whole raft of other social issues that are more likely at fault. We should NOT pander to lower standards, but perhaps we need to set higher standards for our teaching before we set higher standards for our students' learning. I love mathematics, but I only learned to love it after I got involved with computer science and I saw how creative one can be through using math. In all of my mathematics classes from high school through graduate school, I only had one teacher who showed a love of mathematics, who let his students experience the passion of numbers. All of my computer science profs exuded passion. Maybe it is a trait of mathematicians to be taciturn and computer geeks to be fun...I do not know. My brother teaches biological mathematics at Emory University in Atlanta. Part of his students' assignments include watching the TV show "Numbers"...and analyzing it. Just some thoughts.

Alanson (Lanny) Hertzberg

First, let me say that this is a discussion that has been ongoing for quite some time and any solution proposed is likely not an original one. That being said, it seems that we need to stand mathematics education on its head and shake out the old ideas that are still failing our students. We, the mathematics educators, have spent years placing band aids (sorry for the brand naming) on problems that bleed through eventually.

When I tell someone I am a mathematician, they almost always say something like, "Oh, I've always been bad at math." My response is usually, "As long as you think so, you will be." The running, and sad, joke is that most people are very willing to claim they are bad at math and that they can't even balance a check book. It's almost a cynical badge of honor in society. It's not likely to happen that those same individuals, when speaking with an English professor, will claim they can't even read a comic book.

One problem is that the general public views mathematics as a constant pushing around and manipulation of numbers and mystical letters. In fact, most people consider arithmetic to BE mathematics. The unfortunate circumstance is that these misinterpretations have led to an increasing feeling that math courses are "gatekeeper" courses instead of what they truly are - courses meant to increase an individual's ability to think critically and problem solve (with or without the use of numbers).

To this end, there has been a gradual "dumbing down" of mathematics for years and authors/publishers are propagating this demise of math education into an elementary understanding of complex mathematical topics that would otherwise have been deeply covered in the past. We dabble in mathematical topics without getting our hands dirty and we expect our students to understand what math is.

We must start asking challenging questions:

Since when has algebra been an 18 month sequence (prealgebra, elementary algebra, intermediate algebra)? Why does 50% to 60% of each course seem like a repeat of the last course? (This is not true for the calculus series or trigonometry, but is painfully true with the subjects that most of our student population fail.)

Should we pander and lower standards because everyone else (clients) want us to (can you tell my answer to this?)?

Are we doing the students a disservice by following the curriculum that is failing U.S. college students across the country?

Do we cover too many topics with too little detail in each of our courses? This happens to be one of the new initiatives put forth by the American Mathematics Association of Two Year College's "Beyond Crossroads" workshops.

That's just my two cents,
Roy Simpson

Generation Y and Narcissistic Attitudes - Rough Seas Ahead Feb 07

Chuck Pullen forwarded the news report below...what do you think?

MB

The below article about research to be released today is very troubling. It really brings forward something I've been thinking about since I got into teaching. I think this might be a "teachable moment" for our students if we approach it that way.

I normally don't get too excited over "science by press conference", but this so fits what I experience as a relatively new teacher that I think it is worth considering.

Chuck Pullen

A new report suggests that an overdose of self-esteem in college students could mean a rough road ahead.

By Larry Gordon and Louis Sahagun

LA Times Staff Writers February 27, 2007

No wonder YouTube is so popular.

All the effort to boost children's self-esteem may have backfired and produced a generation of college students who are more narcissistic than their Gen X predecessors, according to a new study led by a San Diego State University psychologist.

And the Internet, with all its MySpace and YouTube braggadocio, is letting that self-regard blossom even more, said the analysis, titled "Egos Inflating Over Time."

In the study being released today, researchers warn that a rising ego rush could cause personal and social problems for the Millennial Generation, also called Gen Y. People with an inflated sense of self tend to have less interest in emotionally intimate bonds and can lash out when rejected or insulted.

"That makes me very, very worried," said Jean Twenge, a San Diego State associate professor and lead author of the report. "I'm concerned we are heading to a society where people are going to treat each other badly, either on the street or in relationships."

She and four other researchers from the University of Michigan, University of Georgia and University of South Alabama looked at the results of psychological surveys taken by more than 16,000 college students across the country over more than 25 years.

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory asks students to react to such statements as: "If I ruled the world, it would be a better place," "I think I am a special person" and "I like to be the center of attention."

The study found that almost two-thirds of recent college students had narcissism scores that were above the average 1982 score. Thirty percent more college students showed elevated narcissism in 2006 than in 1982.

Twenge said she and her coauthors are not suggesting that more students today have a pathological narcissistic personality disorder that needs psychiatric treatment. Still, traits of narcissism have increased by moderate but significant amounts, said Twenge, who last year published a book titled "Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled — and More Miserable Than Ever Before."

The narcissism report is under review for publication in a scholarly journal, which would give it the stamp of academic recognition it now lacks.

It was released, Twenge said, in connection with the upcoming paperback edition of her book and with a student affairs workshop today at the University of San Diego at which she and another speaker will discuss how today's college students approach education.

Some of the increase in narcissistic attitudes was probably caused by the self-esteem programs that many elementary schools adopted 20 years ago, the study suggests. It notes that nursery schools began to have children sing songs that proclaim: "I am special, I am special.

Look at me."

Those youngsters are now adolescents obsessed with websites, such as MySpace and YouTube, that "permit self-promotion far beyond that allowed by traditional media," the report says.

Other trends in American culture, including permissive parenting, increased materialism and the fascination with celebrities and reality TV shows, may also heighten self-regard, said study coauthor W. Keith Campbell, psychology professor at the University of Georgia.

"It's part of a whole cultural system," he said.

The researchers seek to counter theories that current college students are more civic-minded and involved in volunteer activities than their predecessors. Because many high schools require community work, increases in volunteering "may not indicate a return to civic orientation but may instead be the means toward the more self-focused goal of educational attainment," the report says.

An annual survey of U.S. college freshmen by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA has found growing interest in public service and social responsibility, presumably in response to Hurricane Katrina and other disasters around the world.

But that survey also showed that current freshmen are much more interested in financial success and less in "a meaningful philosophy of life" than students were in the 1970s.

At Cal State Long Beach on Monday, an informal survey produced divided opinions about Gen Y personality traits.

Students and teachers said they often see examples of inflated egos on campus: students who converse in the computer center while others are trying to concentrate, preen in front of the reflecting windows of the economics building or expect good grades simply for showing up at class.

Laura Rantala, 26, a sociology major, said the phenomenon got in the way of a survey she conducted last semester on the attitudes of men and women about jury duty.

"It took about three minutes to complete the survey," she recalled.

"But many students were so self-absorbed they didn't want to participate.

"I think it's because we all have our own cellphone and iPod with which we're doing our own thing in our own little world," she mused.

Some students seeking degrees in finance and management said, however, that they had good reason to stress confidence and esteem.

James Coari, a lecturer in the College of Business Administration, agreed, to a point. In an interview in his office, Coari said, people looking for jobs "have to be concerned about image because competition is fierce."

Marc Flacks, an assistant professor of sociology, said that he believed that narcissism was too harsh a description for current students and that it was more important to discuss why "we have a society in which narcissistic behavior is a good quality to have."

"This is a bottom-line society, so students are smart to seek the most direct route to the bottom line," he added.

"If you don't have a me-first attitude, you won't succeed."

Flacks summed up the attitudes he often encounters in students, who expect a tangible payoff from their education:

"The old model was a collegial one in which students and professors alike sought knowledge for knowledge's sake. The new model is 'I paid my money, give me my grade and degree.' It makes me want to ask [students], 'Want fries with that order?'"

I am troubled especially by the last 3 paragraphs of the initial report as they do seem to align with a surge in attitude apparent in our students. Appearance in a class is increasingly interpreted as an "A" by the student, just as the fact that an assignment exists regardless of form should merit a high grade. It seems we educators are not getting through to them early enough about the satisfaction in the angst of education and that effort is commensurate to gain. I am saddened by the earlier and earlier loss of passion in our students.

Patricia Wall

Dr. Twenge, the author of *Generation Me*, was the keynote speaker at the CA State Academic Senate Teaching Institute a few weeks ago. Here is a link to her presentation with lots of data and graphs:

<http://www.asccc.org/Events/Teaching/2007/GenerationMe.ppt>

It was a most interesting talk, and I'd be interested in reading the book now. I'm not sure what the solution is, but it would be a good one to figure out. Basically, how to revert culturally to thinking of the needs of others, or putting others first!

Marjorie Duffy

I too find this to be disturbing and depressing, because this confirms what I have been seeing not only in my classroom, but in many areas of society--restaurants, highways, buses and light rail, sidewalks, television, internet, career and salary expectations, and election days (low voter turnout). I am hopeful that this too shall pass--the pendulum frequently swings. However, I am not confident that a swing will occur during my teaching career. Therefore, I fear the beginning of every semester will remain a challenge, as students push and pull to see what rules can be twisted and bent in each classroom.

Perhaps our collective pains and angst could be reduced by faculty and staff having and holding fair expectations, with defined consequences. It would be unrealistic for expectations and consequences to be identical across a diverse college campus. Would an important discussion be what is "fair?" How does one hold realistic standards, implement defined consequences, yet be open to the needs of individual students, without feeding the narcissistic "me?"

C. Frederick Deneke, Ph.D.

I too find this an interesting topic and have been struggling with how to work with this group of students. I like Margaret's analogy to the "work world" and use this in my classes. I find that in spite of giving explicit directions on how to do something, many of the students do not follow or even look at them. When I return their work with a low score and they complain, I ask them how an employer would deal with an employee who did not follow directions. I explain that part of their education in my class is learning how to follow directions. I talk about why in the sciences they need to be able to follow directions to be successful in laboratory classes. And I talk about needing to be able to follow directions in life. Most of them accept this and modify their behavior, but not all. I too have students who come to class daily, do little or no homework or quizzes, fail their exams with abysmally low scores, and yet expect to pass the course. I have to take time to talk with them about their expectations, and often relate it to work and life. It seem like I am spending more and more time teaching students about how to be successful in life rather than successful in chemistry. Yes, the two go hand in hand, but years ago I simply had to teach them about being successful in chemistry. Dave Hodapp

Well Said Dave!

I'm Nym George, and I teach Sociology and I too have similar experiences. Just recently I returned papers back with zeros on them because I had taken the time to warn all of my sections repeatedly about how the format of the papers needed to look in order for them to be accepted. After all the warnings, there was still a significant number of papers that done in accordance with the standards I had set in the syllabus (which were only "the paper must be typed, double spaced, and stapled"). They still felt the need to turn in a page here, or a page and a half there. How many times must it be said that if you do not follow all of the directions, you will get none of the credit?!!

As I returned papers back with scores (for those who followed directions) and zeros (for those who did not) I saw the looks of dissappointment and anger, but I couldn't help feeling that they were more directed at me than, themselves. This made me frustrated, and that when I explained to the students that success in college dependent upon work ethics, and began using similar ideologies that many of you are using. I am now hopeful, and dare I say faithful, that the students will get the message. College is and should be viewed as work; the same kind of committment, dilligence, and excellence that it takes to maintain a job, and bring in money is the same kind that results in passing classes, which ultimately leads to graduation, which constitutes college success. Hopefully the will see that the benefits of having strong work ethics in college is twofold: They get paid in the form of a letter grade. And it surely pays off later in benefits that they'd never dream of. :)

Nyenbeku C. George

Talkin 'bout Their Generation – October 07

<http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2007/10/23/cowie>

For a view of students who are definitely not the same as ours (upperclass kids from an elite school) go to the attached link. Suggests to me a widening culture gap between the upper class and the rest of us.

An excerpt:

Turns out that for my elite students — en route to becoming sharp suits and clever corporate cogs — rock and roll is simply one more element in the finishing process of becoming just like the folks. Roll over Bob Dylan and tell Norman Rockwell the news. Jack Black's character in School of Rock had to teach his anxious and repressed grade schoolers what he knew viscerally: that the purpose of rock and roll is "Sticking it to The Man." Given that most of my students want to become "the man" (in whatever gender the icon of power might come in today), it's certainly not about sticking it to 'em.

Dear Colleagues,

As a proud dad to a son who attends what some would consider an "elite" school, and as a teacher and social scientist who continues to study the influences of information technology on world cultures, I find it not at all surprising that our nation's future leaders are forming their identities close to those of their families and in line with mainstream societal norms. The oft uncontrolled--neither by critical thinking nor information technology, in that order--spread of information has created, perpetuated and seemingly justified so many "revolutions" that those who will be our nation's leaders are, albeit in their own individual ways, turning to what should unite and stabilize the current chaos that is our country. The music of their parents is just one of those uniting forces since our young people no longer consider it revolutionary but, rather, nostalgic.

We need to give due credit our future leaders because they are still standing up against "The Man". But "The Man" has changed: Students as a group pay much less attention to our current government leaders than they do to media outlets and personalities which have been increasingly allowed to portray unconventional values as "normal" and thereby perpetuate the aforementioned chaos. The students who study at elite institutions have seen too many "revolutionaries" get away with too many actions that are not intended to benefit society as a whole, and they are certainly smart enough to know that selfishness cannot be good for a healthy democracy in the long run. Yes, they are not standing up as publicly as their parents, but you might want to create a Facebook account for yourself and look around. You will be surprised...

Respectfully,

Markus

Two observations, Marybeth, and thanks for supplying us with food for thought.

1. I have always been amazed that my children know all the words to any of the Beatles' tunes.
2. When I read this, I recalled the huge strike I witnessed in Milan, Italy about two weeks ago in which people, many age 23-30 or so were engaged in active protest against "squalor" and "poor working opportunities." This took place at the piazza in front of the Duomo, probably 3000 there. I immediately was taken back to the 70's when I was attending college, and we were protesting the war in Vietnam complete with police marching on campus shooting canisters of tear gas, and students actively doing whatever it took to shut down the university. Looking back, I couldn't think of a time since then that students felt strongly enough about something that they would raise their voices in protest with such a sense of emotion and conviction. In Italy, when shots were fired at the demonstration, no one seemed to run, but banded together insolidarity and climbed higher up the statuary and fountain, voices angrier. Technology has dissipated that type of energy into late night blogging with a cup of coffee. I wonder if there is any social issue which would cause our students to strike.

Chris

Students dropping classes – May 07

I have noted a distressing trend this semester...my "drop" rates seem to be much higher than usual. I'm referring to both those students who drop the class part way through and those students who remain on the roll but come to very few classes and at the very end. I don't think that my teaching methods have changed so as to increase the difficulty of the classes, but there are fewer students in class now than is normal at the end of the semester. Have any of you noted this trend?

MB

Hi all- Unfortunately, too many students drop courses far too often and this results in unexpected consequences including ineligibility for federal financial aid, progress probation, and, not to mention the costs involved to the individual student and the state. The questions continue: Are students dropping due to poor academic preparation, too many units, or is it due to conditions that they believe are out of their control (employment, family, etc.), or a combination of reasons. I hear from students when they come in for discipline or when their financial aid is denied. Most declare that they had no idea the impact of dropping classes, believe that a "W" is non-punitive, and don't take into account the impact of their decision on themselves or others. The greater concern for me is the often casualness in which students frequently drop classes or stop participating with no sense of accountability. I'm concerned about how this behavior will become a common practice in other parts of their lives.

Celia

These are important thoughts, particularly those related to setting poor patterns of behavior for the future. This issue of "casualness" might have an important implication for counseling, freshman seminar, etc. It will be important to get a sense from other faculty members about whether they are seeing these same increasing patterns of dropping. It might have important implications for how we prepare for new incoming students this fall.

Judy

I think that both Judy and Celia make good points. I am seeing end of semester attrition. I'm also constantly amazed at the number of students who just "stop." I wish it were limited to younger students -- but it seems to run across the board. With the changes in financial aid requirements, I was seeing more students persisting and getting "F's." Now they just stop coming. It certainly opens the door for some interesting research questions. With some of the other commentaries that have been occurring this semester, it would appear that we are encountering some basic behavioral changes in our students. Now would be a good time to start asking these questions. I think the Ed Initiative/Freshman Seminar experience gave us a good start and I'd like to see it expanded.

Norv

Dear Colleagues -

This is an interesting conversation to me. Thanks for initiating it, Marybeth.

The way I see it there are two distinct phenomena at work here. First, students who formally "drop" class late in the semester do so because they realize they don't have the skills necessary to pass the class. Of course there is always the job change or ill relative for some students, but most of the late semester drops occur because of the lack of pre-requisites in content courses. They think they can do it -- perhaps the counselor told them they could do it -- and so they enroll in courses for which they are NOT prepared. After the midterm exam or research paper, they realize that they can't succeed and so they drop.

The second issue is, in some ways, more insidious than the first. The second way in which students "drop" is by simply disappearing. Their name is still on the roster but they no longer warm a seat in the classroom. This is the casual culture to which Celia refers. Coming and going is their reality. It's the way young people today date each other, treat their employment prospects, and it's the way they view their education. They can take it, and sometimes they can -- and do -- leave it. Sometimes they will disappear for several class sessions, only to reappear one day in class like nothing happened. Usually they bring in a sheepish smile when I ask them where they've been. Sometimes they have been out of state. Sometimes they just slept in too late too many times. There is no sense of urgency or accountability because CRC will always be here when they decide to focus on education. School is one of many, many, many options in their lives. The perceived benefits from education are low, hence the low appreciation for discipline and personal application to achieve a goal. Frequently, they have no goal.

Many young people can't make up their minds because there are too many options. Should they party (which they know very well and which is quite appealing); should they work (which they think will get them some clothes and a latte and seems to be appropriate if they are not in school); or should they go to school (which they have some vague notion seems to be the most correct attitude but the least palatable action)? If they choose the latter, there is still the question of what major to focus on and what career to aspire toward. Some students have told me they feel paralyzed to choose a major for fear of selecting the wrong one. So, they default to no major. This leads them down the long path to goal-less-ness. If there is no goal, why work so hard? Hence, low levels of discipline and low desires to apply oneself.

My perspective on this is informed not only by being college faculty but by the three young adults in my life who call me "mom." As the parent of three twenty-something (step) children, I see the casualness of their lives firsthand. Celia voices her concern that American youth's casual behavior may become common practice in other aspects of their lives. I would suggest that this casual behavior is their life. Welcome to their world.

Sorry for being so long winded. Did I mention that this topic is interesting to me? :)

Maureen Moore

There have been so many wonderful, insightful comments. Based upon my limited sample of 84 students this semester in BIOL 310 (science lab course for non-majors), "only" 11% have withdrawn, compared to 25% in Fall 2005. And, attendance in lab and lecture has been good, except for Friday lectures, which always seems to be an attendance issue.

However, I have growing concerns about my BIOL 410 (science lab course for majors), where withdrawals have been creeping upwards, and is now at 21%--compared to 11% in Fall 2006. In years of teaching science majors and non-majors, I have never had a withdrawal rate in any majors class so high, especially compared to non-majors. Is this an indication of increasing under-preparedness of our science majors? Or perhaps that the time and energy demands of science labs are increasingly in conflict with employment and/or family needs? Most likely, it is a combination of these and other factors as others have indicated. In any case, these withdrawals in my science majors course are giving me many concerns.

Fred Deneke

Hello all. I am sorry for not chiming in on any of the previous conversations. I am "alive and well" and still working here, and I do enjoy reading my colleagues' perspectives on various issues. This topic, wow, really prompts me to share an incident that happened today which speaks to low or no accountability, attrition (disappearing acts) and casualness (well, since we are being honest, can I say a touch of "laziness" and the most cavalier attitudes I have ever witnessed?).

Scenario: Research paper due today (red flags going up)

Time: 2:00pm (which is supposed to mean class BEGINS at 2:00pm, right?)

Attendance: 7 students ON TIME (only about 16 still enrolled from the original 29, most are/were "disappearing acts")

Since I knew that students would attempt to show up late, I posted a sign outside the door, stating that the class began at 2pm, that it is now 2:10pm, the research paper is officially "late," and to please wait until their classmate completes his/her presentation before entering (to avoid disruption--students are typically nervous enough without the added stress of casual students shuffling in during presentations).

Two students obeyed and waited until the first presenter was done, then I opened the door, letting them know it was ok to come in--they understood and apologized for being late.

Here's the kicker: After the second student presented, I checked outside again, and on my note, a student wrote, "So What." So what! Be courteous to your classmates, so what? Your paper is late, so what? YOU are late, so what? You could very well fail the course, so what?

Accountability? Casualness? I used to feel terrible frustration; now I am kind of hurting for students because . . . I don't know . . . I'm just hurting for them because they just do not get "it," whatever "it" represents.

Dr. Melanie A. Lewis

Teaching in the study abroad program certainly gives you a different perspective on this and a different way to influence students. Students paid \$9000.00 to go live in Florence for a semester and take 12 units. The five faculty there agreed at the beginning that we would not tolerate unexcused absences. We agreed that students who missed classes because of illness had to bring a doctor's note verifying it. Students who had more than three unexcused absences in any class were subject to being sent home...with no refund. They signed a contract to that effect at the beginning of the semester. We sent no students home. I sent students out of class because they were too sick to be there. They wanted to be in Italy, so they went to class. As Maureen wrote, they needed a goal. Perhaps our students need to understand the immediate rewards they get out of not dropping classes as well as the long term benefits. That seems to me to be something that we (faculty and counselling staff) need to do for our students every semester. In Italy we contacted every absent student the day they missed a class to find out why they weren't there. Perhaps we could do the same in Sacramento. If on the first day of classes, we made sure that we had correct contact info (email address and phone number), we could follow up with missing students as they missed. I was amazed in Italy to hear students say again and again "I did not know you cared." I am not saying this is an end-all solution, and I certainly realize that we teachers have enough to do, but a lot of this could be somewhat automated, with pre-done sentences that you could paste into email. It is just more food for thought, about how to give some students a short-term goal of: making your professor happy or responding to care and concern or getting the nag off your back.

Alanson (Lanny) Hertzberg

Hi Colleagues,

This thread is very interesting, and, once I read Maureen's email, I knew I had to respond.

Regarding her second perspective (casual behavior, too many choices), I am largely in agreement, as my experiences which inform my views are very similar (also a step parent to 3 twenty-somethings). I would like to offer an additional explanation for this.

Could it be that these students are making a rational choice based on their perception of value? Social life, work (or at least income), family relationships and education are, to varying degrees and combinations, the main issues in most of our students' lives. For reasons demonstrated by Maureen, the perceived benefits of attending courses are not often focused, and certainly not immediate (that was also true for me as a community college student - I have more than a few "W"s on my 10 year-long community college transcript).

I, too, am troubled by the high percentage of non-completers (closer to 25% 30% in Automotive, BTW). I know this is a heretical to some of you, but, I wonder if the rate of course completion would be higher if the financial cost to attend were higher? I suspect that the answer would be yes, and I know that would also result in lower initial enrollments. But perhaps the students who did enroll would be more motivated to succeed (complete)?

What I take from Maureen, and others who have contributed to this topic, is that maybe California's community college is a bit too accessible? Judging by the out of pocket expenses to go to college (about \$200 for fees and

books for a typical 3-unit course), would students appreciate the experience better if they paid more for it? This should also be accompanied by a greater usage and availability of financial aid, as I recognize that there are motivated students who lack adequate means.

I'm just throwing this out there, because, like it or not, I think it does explain at least part of the problem. I like the accessibility of community college, and, with fees structured the way they are, I think we'll need to focus on helping those who demonstrate the will to succeed. Those are the students who show up for classes, schedule appointments around their school schedule, do the reading and homework, and ask questions in lecture (Yes, I make those expectations abundantly clear in my courses).

I enjoy being a "learning facilitator", and I want to show those who want to learn how to learn. We can't ultimately be responsible for students' choices. They are free to fail or withdraw, and they can come back later when their life circumstances change or when they become sufficiently motivated to succeed.

I hope this doesn't come across as a rant from an uncaring instructor. I do care deeply for my students, and I want them to succeed. But I can only do so much, and I should only do so much, so I can still be an effective facilitator for those who are prepared to learn.

Drew Carlson

This is such an interesting topic. I see a lot of withdrawals and disappearances, but most of my CIS classes are electives, not part of the GE requirements, so I try to chalk it up to that. I have seen an increase in students not showing up, then showing up for the final to get an F, but at least show participation (I suspect financial aid motives). Like Drew, I wonder if we should change the stakes for dropping, but I consider perhaps just stricter rules could be enforced sooner in the semester.

I think there are as many reasons for dropping as there are students. Just yesterday, while this discussion was going on electronically, I received email from 2 of my students who are no longer attending. Allow me to quote:

"My family received death threats so i have to move> I have been under alot if stress trying to make sense of it all. I really was enjoying myself in school but as a dad i could no longer keep my focus. I planned to drop my classes and move to Georgia."

Or, from a completely different note:

"I wanted to reassure you as a teacher, and clarify for my sake the reasons behind my lackadaisical manner toward your class. I have been in college for about 2 years. I have taken 2 classes every sem. I have never really put my full passion and effort into a class. The biggest factor is lack of passion/purpose. I don't mean passion in a sense of emotional hype, but rather sustaining purpose and meaning for what I am doing."

Marjorie Duffy

I've followed this discussion with great interest, as my one big disappointment in returning to the classroom is the drops I've encountered. Like Norv expressed, I've had the "stops" that just don't show up any more, but I've also had (what seems to me excessive) "drops."

Throughout the semester my thoughts on the subject of student drops have gone like this: "Maybe it's the discipline; accounting to some students is one big "math" story problem??? Maybe it's me--yikes, that's scary! Maybe it's the way I've structured the course?" Throughout the semester I've continued to search for the "why" and have had some good hallway discussions with colleagues on the subject. Nearly every colleague has comforted me with statements like, "It's not you; it's happening to everybody"; and, yet, I'm not satisfied because I want to understand the reasons why my students drop. I walk by classrooms that appear to be "full" and I ask myself, "Why is such and such a class still full, and my class (and many others) is empty?" What are the faculty with full classes doing (or not doing) that results in better retention?

I appreciate the comments Lisa shared regarding creating community. The fact that you did not make the same effort in the evening class and experienced significantly higher drop outs may indicate that the extra time in creating community is a significant factor in your outstanding retention for the semester. In any case, it gives me something to think about for next semester.

I also appreciated Lanny's comments regarding study abroad and the discussion that followed regarding the cost of education that Drew and others contributed to. While one thing I love about community colleges is accessibility and affordability, the system does encourage lack of commitment.

I'd like to second Nov's and other's suggestion that there be some solid research done to help us better understand "dropping behavior." While there is a good body of research literature on the subject, it would be instructive and helpful to study our own students' behavior. In addition, please continue the online conversations among faculty colleagues. It is very helpful to know we are not alone, and to grow in understanding as we read what other colleagues have to say about important topics like this one. In particular, thank you, Maureen for your insightful comments. They were very instructive.

Thanks for the discussion opportunity, Marybeth. I appreciate having an opportunity to share thoughts on this important subject.

Janis

I've gotten into this thread late, but a couple of things come to mind:

I too think sometimes that the (relatively) low cost of community college makes for lower commitment, but if that were true wouldn't the persistence and retention rates have been rising as the price per unit rose? I am a community college alum, and when I attended there was NO cost, except for the purchase price of books and supplies -- my admittedly spotty memory doesn't include classes that were half empty by the end of a term.

I do wonder if part of the problem is that, for some students, it's the first time they have had the opportunity/responsibility for choosing the courses for which they enroll, and that the information available to them re: the courses creates a situation where they end up in courses that are a poor fit.

I would like to propose a suggestion -- why not put into place a short questionnaire that students would complete (of course with the proviso that they can decline to participate!) when the person withdraws from classes? Maybe just two or three questions...

I would be really interested, given that I have heard from a number of people, to know if the withdrawal rate is indeed higher than in previous terms...is there "something going on" that we are not aware of??

Lastly, in a shameless plug for referrals to career counseling -- it is well documented in student development literature that those with educational intent -- a declared major, a stated vocational goal, etc. -- have higher completion rates than those without. Many of us in the Counseling Department have expertise in working with students to develop clearer career goals, and we would be most appreciative of referrals (right, Steve L.?)

Thanks again, Marybeth, for making these discussion threads come to life, and thanks to all my colleagues for the opportunity to work with you to serve students!

In his message below, Drew threw out an idea that perhaps community colleges are too accessible and that students would appreciate the experience better if they paid more for it. While I agree that students would value their education more if they had to pay for it or work hard to pay for it, I am concerned that higher costs will "punish" students who cannot afford it, especially those who are first in their family to be in college. Speaking from a personal point of view, since there is no college tradition in families of first generation college students, many of whom come from low-income and/or immigrant families, it is difficult enough to make the decision to go to college without the added worry of the expense of college. If you add the fact that tuition is going to be more expensive or that there will be less financial aid to family or social pressures (e.g. to get a job to help support the family; to get married, etc.), then many of these students will just give up without even trying college.

What I am more concerned is another trend I see in the CRC Library that disturbs me. I sometimes see students coming in with their parents to work on assignments or go through the online orientation for registration. This, by itself, is laudable—it's great to have parents involved in students' learning! Unfortunately, frequently, when I see the student-parent pair, it is the parent who is doing the work or completing the assignments; the student is either relegated to observer status or has tuned out completely and is not even paying attention. I have also

worked with parents who come to the library alone to do all the legwork in finding research materials for their child's paper.

Even more disturbing to me is that I have found the same trend with elementary students and their parents when I worked at a public library when I was in Washington State. I'm not sure if California has the same growing trend where parents are completing their elementary students' assignments, though some discussions with public librarians here suggest that it is. If that's the case, and parents are doing most of the work for these students, and the students do not need to exert any effort to complete their assignments, how is this affecting the attitudes and behaviors of the students when they enter college? How confident will these students be in their study skills and how lost will they be without their parent guide/enabler?

So, instead of raising the tuition and fees, which is a hardship to low-income students and a barrier to learning, I would be more interested in exploring ways to mentor or guide students so that they can be more successful in college. It can be quite bewildering to go to college, get to choose the classes you want and be responsible for your own learning when many of those choices have always been made for you in K-12. As Lisa Marchand and Lanny Hertzberg have illustrated in their examples, perhaps adding a touch of caring and community along with clear expectations will encourage students to stay in class and keep learning.

Lily

Wow! Great discussion! Thanks for the topic!

I strongly believe that increasing tuition isn't a solution. Our open door policy is an exceptional opportunity for ALL ADULTS to improve their lives, and thereby, our society at large.

I really appreciate the concept of community, and the need for more opportunities to "expand" the classroom beyond our local walls and campus.

There is discussion going on in Matricualtion (the process of step one to apply to the final step of completion)of mandatory orientation.

I'm sensing here a consensus on mandatory MATRIUCATION. That is, a thorough and complete process for ALL students, regardless of their demographic background.

There is no way to GUARANTEE success, but it might help if we had all of the following:

1. A mandatory assessment and orientation for COLLEGE behaviors, expectations, procedures and responsibilities.
2. A consensus by all faculty and managers of what behaviors WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED, with support to ENFORCE our policies.
3. A re-evaluation of the campus climate. That is, we are becoming more like a corporate model with top down management. If we returned to our former model of "shared governance" in which ALL segments had input and equal opportunities for staff development, our research projects and findings might be more ground-breaking and insightful.

Thanks for this opportunity to speak,

Marlo

Connectedness April 06

An interesting question came up in a conversation lately. A fair amount of research has shown that students who feel connected to the college have higher success rates (try typing in "connectedness student success" as key words in Google or something similar. lots of info will come up). The next question has to do with us, the faculty. Do we do better if we feel a sense of connectedness to the college - does having a sense of being at home at CRC help us be better teachers? How do we gain, and maintain, such a connectedness? Can, and do, we transmit this to our students?

Connectedness -- and a related concept of "mattering." Google Schlossberg, Nancy K., and links to work she and others did in the 1980s, 1990s may come up. Feeling that one matters to at least one other person on campus is suggested to be one predictor of persistence. Pascarella and Terenzini's work (1991, new edition, sorry don't have the date, maybe 2001?) "How College Affects Students," is a rich source of studies, data, and ideas.

To address your first question "...do we feel better..." I would say, at least for myself, certainly. How do I gain that connectedness? Through joining, finding or creating "community" with those of like minds; through involvement in things in which I feel not only competence, but a sense that my efforts can have a positive effect; the positive self-efficacy that occurs when I am successful working with students and my colleagues; when I feel like I am a part of "something larger than myself."

It strikes me that those seem very much like the qualities of an environment which I found as a student at the community college where I first began this foray into higher education. When I worked in telecommunications, it was not that different -- the focus of our efforts were, but the essentials of our human connectedness were not. This may be true for others, not so much for myself, but the sense of environmental "fit," that one is in the right place, that one's space "feels" comfortable (those who personalize their work spaces to a greater degree may be creating that to some extent).

For me, not so much the physical space as the psychological space -- finding interesting people to work and converse with -- doing things like this.

I think very much we "transmit" that to our students -- it is in the enthusiasm we all bring to our work, the sense of enjoyment in coming to CRC every work day. I have had countless students (and this is something that I have not always experienced at the other colleges at which I have worked) tell me that one of the reasons they came to CRC is that others had told them that "people are nice there," that we seem interested in the students (as a general sense of the place), that it doesn't seem like such a big, impersonal place, and that they stay because they have found what they were told to be true.

The fact that I feel like I can put this out where folks I don't know will read this, but I feel comfortable doing so is an example of the sense of safety and acceptance -- really powerful things for students who may not have been successful in educational environments in the past, and feeling somewhat uncertain about this one. I sense that we don't only do this for each other, but for our students also on a regular basis.

Thanks for letting me "share."

Lynn Fowler

To all...someone observed that I mentioned "faculty" in the last discussion post and failed to mention the rest of us. I most assuredly did not mean to slight the classified staff or the managers and I offer my humble apologies. I was thinking about the next question, which was about teaching, and I goofed. Clearly all of us are included in the sense of connection and all of us can have immense impacts on our students and our colleagues.
MB

One way of showing connectedness is to be able to help students with Campus resources, opportunities and get to know your colleagues. This shows students that you are part of a team, not just an individual working on their own.

Work plagiarized from the internet March 06

Hello all,

Phil Summers sent the interesting comments below for discussion. I have also seen this increasing dramatically. Personally, I try to use the following strategies, more or less successfully:

1. I spend a fair bit of time in class teaching them how to write, in my case about biology, clearly and concisely. I use group work, practice questions which are collected and commented on but have no grade recorded, verbal demonstrations and discussions, etc.
2. I've shifted to more assignments that are difficult to copy from the internet, e.g. reports on inquiry projects, and fewer standard term papers.
3. I tell the students that this type of plagiarism is cheating and then I spend a lot of time using Google to find the copiers. Google works well for me for this purpose, but it still takes hours to check many papers. If I do catch someone, and it happens regularly, I give them a zero on that work.

Tell us all how you deal with this, and what you do about other types of cheating.

Here is a topic for discussion:

The number of reports I get handed in from students that are plagiarized from the internet is exploding! Even though I warn my students against copy/paste I still get them. I tell my students to use their own words. It occurred to me that this might discriminate against those students who are not fluent in English. Sure enough, most of these reports are from students with difficulty in English. My classes require students to be able to express themselves logically and (somewhat) grammatically.

Any comments?

Phil Summers

I find that terms we take for granted (such as cheating and plagiarism) need to be defined, and examples given. The first attachment is a section from one of my course syllabi and the second attachment is a handout I give before an assignment is due that gives examples of proper and improper paraphrasing. I need to refine these, but they at least get a conversation going with students who are trying to do the right thing, but do not know how.

Fred Deneke

Particular failures of academic integrity (which include a variety of behaviors in addition to cheating and plagiarizing e.g. knowingly furnishing false information, etc.) generally stem from a variety of causes. Significant amongst these is ignorance on the part of the student. (Fred is right, we cannot take for granted that students understand what we mean when adjure them not to cheat or plagiarize. We also cannot take for granted that students understand the extent, nature or source of the disvalue academia places on cheating and plagiarizing. We must educate our students in respect to these elements of academic socialization just as we educate them in respect to others and just as we educate them in respect to discipline-specific content.) Also significant are student-teacher relationship issues (studies show that students are less likely to intentionally cheat or plagiarize if they respect their teachers) and general motivational issues (studies show that students are less likely to intentionally cheat or plagiarize on an assignment they perceive to be of value). Strategies for addressing failures of academic integrity are, roughly speaking, either aimed at detection (catching and punishing students who plagiarize or cheat) or aimed prevention (keeping students from cheating and plagiarizing in the first place.) Prevention strategies, in turn, are, roughly speaking, either of the student-external or the student-internal variety. Ultimately, as I see it, over-reliance on student-external approaches like devising novel assignments or requiring students to submit essays "certified to be clean" by Turnitin.com

merely generates a kind of academic arms race in which (at least the more determined) students devise new means of cheating or plagiarizing which circumvent the present set of external constraints. While student-external prevention strategies have some place in the total solution to the present crisis of academic integrity, the most important elements in that solution are the student-internal prevention strategies; those based on the kind of contributions to a student's academic socialization Fred has identified as well as those that address relationship and general motivational issues.

Best,
Rick

I like the fact you are defining terminology and giving examples in your syllabus, because students do not always understand what we are saying. Students have to do their own observations and reports in my classes, so “plagiarism” isn’t the same issue for me that it is for many of you. On the other hand, I have to be sure the expectations and instructions for the reports are very clearly stated in a step-by-step outline. Some don’t know how to proceed with a “narrative” format!! I find we’re all English teachers regardless of our area of expertise. Now I’m going to make additional efforts to inform my students about the many times they will need writing skills in early childhood.....from writing notes to parents, taking dictation from children, to record keeping and evaluations. Thanks for the examples.

Ruth Oxman

Surveys of students – Class responsibilities - Feb 06

Recently, a couple of us conducted informal surveys in our classes which produced interesting answers. We thought you might be interested in asking your students something similar. If you do, let us know how the results turn out.

Why do students drop part-way through the class? I asked my GE Biology class this question as a bonus at the end of an exam (it was worth a couple of extra credit points) and got many thoughtful responses. What surprised me was the number of students who indicated that people drop classes because they do badly on early tests or assignments and have no idea of how to fix the problem – several mentioned that the students are reluctant to approach faculty for help in this case. I wonder how many students we lose, not because they are lazy, but because they are lost with respect to how to overcome deficits in background or study skills. Would it help if we more strongly invited them to come to us for help, stressing that we may be able to show them how to improve in the class?

Why don't students complete their homework? Dave Hodapp surveyed his class about this (he can send you his short survey if you are interested) and reports the following:

50% of the respondents indicated that one of the reasons they did not complete the assignments on time was because of technical difficulties (which I had suspected).

But what was surprising to me was that 50% of the respondents also indicated one of the reasons for not completing the assignments were family obligations. For some of them this was the major reason.

33% replied that work was a factor and 33% also indicated that they had too many other classes.

33% said that finding a computer was also a factor in not completing assignments.

What do you think?

MB

I wasn't surprised by the answers, as I have morning classes with mostly younger students. Family issues are huge. A student told me yesterday that she will be dropping my class as she needs to get a paying job to help her family and hopes to be back this summer. The lack of computers and printers is another big one. In addition, my syllabus states that I will take late papers and deduct some points, but some have made the assumption that I won't take these papers, so they don't turn them in. Now I am seeing students take my class for the second time after failing the first time, because they finally get it!

Ruth Oxman

If you read that book, "Framework of Poverty," you will see that for many people who have a family history of poverty, family obligations (I'm not referring to overwhelming family issues, but ones others may consider "minor") take precedence over work and school, when people who are not from a background of poverty will prioritize work or school over those kinds of family conflicts. Your own observations about students who feel swamped by early failures really makes sense to me, and I am thinking of ways to make myself more available to students right at the beginning. The problem is, at that time of the course, you are still forming relationships with your students, and the connections are not as easy. I'm thinking I have to keep on top of all grading more carefully at the beginning and contact students who fall behind right away. Thanks for your continued work on behalf of our students.

John Pratt

I think these interesting responses suggest a need for intervention at the beginning of the students' academic careers, teaching them about the avenues available to assist them, the kinds of problems that they might encounter (peer models could be very helpful in this regards, to "normalize" the issue). Also, assisting the students in better understanding the need for managing time in the same way they might manage a household

budget (if I only have "X" amount of time, how do I apportion it?). These two findings suggest an area in which we (instructional and "non-instructional" faculty) could work collaboratively.

Lynn Fowler

Is there a first year student tour/workshop offered by the college to provide the students with information on where they can use computers, how to interact with faculty, how to make their college years more successful and possibly, how to cope with outside distractions. Possibly this workshop should be a required first term activity for all starting students. If one has not started, possibly we could make a voluntary program and start a longitudinal study of their success when compared to students that have opted in not attending such a program. Giving them the required tools will go a long way and letting them know that faculty are here to help, support, and that we are all human just like them. As such their education should be looked at as a team effort. It is hard to understand that some of our students don't have free availability to a computer, something that we have all taken for granted. Do we know the percentage of households within the CRC area that have computers in their home? Just a thought!

David Lagala

My Comment would be that many students don't have study skills and need tutors early on in the semester. Maybe there is some way we can make it easier for set up peer helpers. Perhaps by having links on the college website saying "Register as a Tutor" and "Find a Tutor"??

Phil Summers

I am interested in this particular discussion because it is directly related to our classroom experience. Family, health and money issues are constants with my students. I just had a student come by from another campus taking a Saturday class that feels she cannot continue, but wants to sit in on one of our classes and learn what she can without the pressure of a grade. It occurred to me that she is willing to come, but the commitment to course work and grade responsibility is not there. I am curious about our student's thinking processes sometimes. Anyway, add me to the list.

Margaret

Marybeth,

There are great! I'm pursuing an EdD (one day, I won't be tired anymore!), so I find this fascinating. The fourth response reminds me of classroom discussions we've had around retention/persistence. Freshmen orientation programs at universities represent one approach to dealing with this. I think it would be great to have something like this for new students. Of course, it's a daunting challenge given the diversity of our students (evening courses, online, etc.)

Michael J Carney