Preparing for Difficult Classroom Situations

Experts To Discuss How Learning Research Applies to Classroom Teaching

See Summer Instructional Development Institute Details on Pages 14–15
Teaching Award
Winners Discuss
Classroom Challenges

From outdated course material to unenthusiastic students, professors are regularly confronted with challenges to teaching. However, methods or approaches to tackling challenges may lead to breakthroughs in classroom teaching, resulting in a better learning environment for both teacher and students.

In this issue of Teaching Times, winners of the 2009 Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Awards and Tina and David Bellet Arts and Sciences Teaching Excellence Awards detail ways that they have found to overcome significant challenges that they have faced in the classroom. For example, dissatisfaction with student learning led Gretchen Bender, History of Art & Architecture, and Mark Roberts, Medicine, to develop innovative tactics for engaging students in course material. Jennifer Cartier, Education, developed interactive feedback to keep students motivated and reflective about the learning process. Michael Madison, Law, and Joe Grabowski, Chemistry, have focused on integrating active learning into the curriculum. Marla Ripoll, Economics, and Chuck Kinder, English, inspire students to improve by helping them to apply course concepts in authentic learning assignments.

Although each course and classroom is unique, these faculty exemplify the ongoing process of facing—and overcoming—diverse and common problems in the classroom.

1Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award Winners interviewed for this issue are Mark Roberts, Jennifer Cartier, Michael Madison, Marla Ripoll, and Chuck Kinder.
2Tina and David Bellet Arts and Sciences Teaching Excellence Award winners are Gretchen Bender and Joe Grabowski.
Helping Students to Find Their Voices

By Caroline Wilson, Teaching Times Intern

Throughout the almost thirty years Chuck Kinder, English, has taught at Pitt, he has come to recognize that each student is a new challenge.

“Whatever skills they might have, whatever gifts or talents they have, they have stories to tell and it’s my job to help them get those stories out and find their voices and help them hone their skills, and I have to do each one differently,” said Kinder.

In order to accomplish this, Kinder tries to develop a personal relationship with each student he encounters in the classroom. He discovers what authors they enjoy reading, which writers they admire, and he recommends new writers to them that they have yet to experience.

“Each student is a unique challenge because they’re so essentially different,” said Kinder.

Director of Pitt’s Creative Writing Program, Kinder teaches a graduate writing workshop and a senior seminar in fiction writing. He is also the author of three novels and, most recently, a book of creative nonfiction.

Kinder explains that he tries not to do harm to his students’ writing. That is, Kinder tries not to dampen their creative and artistic spirits or modify students’ own work too extensively. “Writing is intuitive more than anything else,” said Kinder. “I have no particular theories about writing. Over the years my own aesthetics have changed; some writers I used to admire and like have evolved into other authors that I now admire. It’s a pretty fluid situation. I try to help students find their own voices.”

If his students enjoy creating their own imaginative plots, he encourages them to do so; but if they have difficulty doing so, he has found that it is not necessarily a bad thing. When writing a story, Kinder has found that he can turn his own weakness in creating intricate plots to his advantage. Kinder claims he writes too close to his own personal experiences and does not act on his “imaginative abilities” like other writers do. “Therefore, I teach students to trust the accidents in a story and to trust the unfolding story. I use my weak point as a bad plotter to try to point out that it can be a very creative kind of thing,” said Kinder.

Kinder finds it can be challenging to grade the works of a fiction writing class because of the different abilities the students encompass. Writing students are not all equally talented writers; there will always be those students who are more gifted than others, said Kinder. “When I give students grades, it’s a subjective judgment on my part. My responsibility is to be as fair as possible and always encourage the less-gifted writers. Everybody is capable of improving their writing skills, and I reward what I consider to be improvement in those skills. You can’t teach talent, but you can help teach and hone writing skills,” said Kinder.

The nature of writing workshop courses is for students to read and critique one another’s stories, so student collaboration is frequent. Though all students are competitive to one degree or another, Kinder said, the key is to never let the class get mean spirited.

“What I teach is creative writing; [the students] have to think outside the box—that’s what we’re all about,” said Kinder.

Caroline Wilson is a sophomore majoring in English Literature and earning a certificate in Global Studies.
Marla Ripoll, Economics, enjoys the challenge of thinking about how to share knowledge with students and creatively getting to the bottom of a concept. She teaches an Introduction to Development Economics course for undergraduates and also Advanced Macroeconomic Theory and Topics in Economic Growth and Development for graduate students. A challenge in all of these classes is the diversity of students, from the more motivated students who have accumulated more knowledge in the field than others, to those less interested in economics. “As the group becomes more heterogeneous, it becomes harder to figure out how to avoid boring the advanced, motivated students while, at the same time, including and energizing those who are less interested,” said Ripoll.

To solve this dilemma, when giving out writing assignments, Ripoll offers comprehensive instructions in order to guide those who may have problems understanding the research question. “I write very detailed instructions on how to proceed: where to find the data, how to read a table, and what kinds of examples the students can give. By doing that I am establishing a minimum I want everyone to do, even if they have trouble doing it,” said Ripoll.

However, in the same homework assignment, Ripoll gives students flexibility. She may require that all students complete three tables, but then she invites more interested and motivated students to create four or five tables if they think they can gain or discover new knowledge from doing extra work. “These students who are more ambitious and who may like the subject more can use their abilities to advance and complete a paper that is more complete and more challenging,” said Ripoll. This way, Ripoll allows those who want to do more serious research the opportunity to do so, but those who are less interested are still learning how to complete minimum requirements for a meaningful paper.

Ripoll applies the same concept in her graduate classes. While these students are already advanced, some may possess more math skills, while others may already have economic degrees. To allow for students’ different backgrounds, Ripoll provides layers of problems in the homework she assigns each week. “There are two or three problems, but each problem is divided into parts, and the level of sophistication and difficulty increases as the parts progress from a to b to c to d, etc. When I go so far as part “g” of a problem, I expect that very few will answer it, but I still include it because I want to give the chance to those who really want to be challenged,” said Ripoll. She also said that although students who attempt these more complex problems may not get them correct, they at least have already completed the minimum set of problems assigned, which allows them to feel more confident in their understanding of the material. However, said Ripoll, there will always be the challenge available for those who want to use their abilities in a more advanced way.

“In all these different strategies, the key is to provide a variety and to provide in the same package different levels of complexity of the same concept. This allows everybody the opportunity to try and, ultimately, to move beyond where they were before,” said Ripoll. •
Engaging Medical Professionals in Conceptually Challenging Work

By Mary Kate Hegarty, Teaching Times Intern

Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award

Mark Roberts

Mark Roberts, Medicine, noted that the clinical research classes he teaches, such as Clinical Decision Analysis, are “almost entirely designed for medical professionals who are already clinicians of some type. We teach very atypical students who are used to being highly respected for their expertise.”

“Though these student-clinicians are used to grueling schedules, they are often no longer accustomed to engaging in conceptually difficult work as students,” said Roberts. However, because many focuses in modern clinical research are concept based, this is an obstacle they must overcome in Roberts’ classes. To facilitate this transition in students, “We try very hard to design the lectures and the curriculum to be directly related to an activity that they can see themselves doing in their research, so that it’s real to them, rather than abstract,” said Roberts. In his statistics class, for example, Roberts asks his students to look at problems dealing with “the inter-rater reliability of chest X-rays in the diagnoses of pneumonia rather than test scores on grade school papers.”

To keep course material even more relevant, Roberts says that the program tries to change the examples used in problems almost every year so that recent “highly-visible” examples, which many of the students will already be familiar with through medical journals, can be used in class. Roberts also incorporates group exercises into his classes. This way, students from a variety of medical backgrounds, levels of understanding, and areas of expertise are able to interact and share ideas pertaining to research methodology. “If you’re trying to do scientifically and clinically accurate research, you must have people from multiple disciplines collaborating,” said Roberts.

“How ever, though these practices help to make class work more relatable to students, the curriculum is intense and difficult,” said Roberts. Between completing fellowships, working as clinicians, and attending medical school, Roberts’ students often have limited time to devote to learning. Because of this, courses are taught on the clinical calendar rather than the University calendar, and last about one month. During this month, the work is intense. “We need to frontload course material and be aggressive about learning research methodology so it doesn’t take students too long to complete their research and move on,” said Roberts.

Though teaching an intense workload to a group of already-busy students can be a challenge, there is a positive side: dedicated students. “All the students are coming because they want to do research, and that’s one of the reasons why I feel that I teach at an unfair advantage—because every person in my classroom wants to be here. I don’t have to worry about motivating people,” said Roberts.

Despite his challenging schedule as a physician, researcher, and professor, Roberts doesn’t find it hard to stay motivated in teaching his classes. Even after teaching physicians for “twenty-some years,” Roberts said, “I still really enjoy doing it.”

Mary Kate Hegarty is a sophomore majoring in Nonfiction Writing and Biology.
A visitor to a School of Law class taught by Michael Madison might be surprised to see squirt guns and stuffed animals at the lecture podium. Props based on real-world law cases are one way that Madison meets the challenge of making his classes fun. He finds this especially important for upper-level classes. Madison strives to create enjoyable courses that pique students’ interest, while also structuring classes that motivate them to complete the work in order to do well.

“I keep the course lively in order to make them want to come to class,” Madison said. “All of the props are relevant to the course, because we talk about those things.” For instance, Madison brought a pair of stuffed tigers into his Copyright Law class in order to illustrate how the manufacturer of one tiger might sue the maker of a similar tiger for copyright infringement.

Madison also tries to discuss “the core concepts that are constant,” so that his students can adapt to alterations in the law. For example, Madison said that intellectual property law is always changing, but the basic framework and goals of legal education have not changed much since his father attended law school 50 years ago.

However, that’s not to say that Madison hasn’t tweaked the way he teaches law over the past twelve years. “I spend less time teaching the substance of the law and I spend more time teaching about how to be a lawyer,” Madison said, adding that he also wants students to see the connection between the subject he teaches and other subject matter.

He has also learned not to answer all of the students’ questions, but rather to teach them how to find answers to the questions on their own. “When graduates become lawyers, they will need the skills to answer their own questions, because professors won’t be around to solve their clients’ problems,” Madison said.

Lauren Kirschman is a sophomore English Writing major, specializing in journalism.
One of the most prominent challenges for Jennifer Cartier, Education, is to find out what her graduate students know and to respond with feedback. Cartier focuses on curriculum and teacher professional development in science education in the Department of Instruction and Learning. Her courses include a science methods course for preservice elementary teachers, a science curriculum course, and a doctoral course, The Study of Teaching, that she designed in collaboration with Margaret Smith, a colleague who previously won a Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award.

It is critical to have an assessment process to find out what students already know and to communicate to students about how they are doing in class, Cartier explained. When she first started teaching, Cartier did not assign any kind of formative assessments; rather, she would give out a handful of assignments, grade them and return them to students with written feedback. “As I mature as a teacher, I realize that, especially since I see my students only once a week, it is really important that I get information from them every week and give them back something every week. So the challenge becomes obvious: how does one keep up with that?” said Cartier.

Giving students individual evaluations of their work is very time consuming, especially when teaching three classes, said Cartier. One strategy she uses to “share the burden” of evaluating students’ work is to assign students a general question to respond to in the last 10 minutes of class. Cartier then reads all the responses, types up a collective summary of what people wrote, and shares it on Blackboard so students can reevaluate their work before the next class.

“The responsibility for the students, if they get a score that’s less than perfect, is to go back to what I’ve written in terms of my summary notes, then examine what they wrote, and compare the two,” said Cartier. The students observe where they fell short in terms of what they forgot to mention or did not understand; then they write a short response, explained Cartier. Students can increase their scores; however, Cartier “caps” the additional points at the equivalent of an A-.

“This process forces them to articulate what aspects of their ideas were incorrect or incomplete so they simply have to confront the shortcomings in their own knowledge. This is different from receiving a graded quiz or test and looking at the grade because it encourages students to reflect deeply about what aspects of the thinking were problematic in the first place,” said Cartier.

The positive outcome of this procedure, explained Cartier, is that students are getting instructor feedback, and she does not have to write the same comments multiple times. Instead, she types the summary once and posts it on Blackboard.

Cartier acknowledges that teaching effectively is a constant process of looking at problems and developing new strategies and approaches. For example, Cartier finds it challenging to keep students motivated and provide structured tasks they can productively engage with over an extended period of time in three-hour evening courses.

One approach she has found successful is for students to role play in small groups using scenarios in which they have to come to a consensus. For example, some students may act as school board members and others as curriculum material designers who are part of a school district that needs to select a new curriculum. This is a situation that many graduates, as secondary teachers, will actually face in their professional work, said Cartier. “The whole scenario gives them a chance to practice and really use what they’ve learned. The way I keep them motivated is to provide different kinds of contexts in which they have to participate. Role playing makes them a little more willing to take risks,” explained Cartier.
Gretchen Bender believes there are several challenges teachers face in the classroom: from building enthusiasm to boosting self-confidence, while also urging students to challenge themselves, stretch their limits, and think critically.

Bender, director of undergraduate advising in History of Art and Architecture, teaches the far extremes of the curriculum, from introductory core courses to research and writing seminars for advanced majors. Bender said that despite the differences in the size and structure of the classes, her main goal is to communicate her passion for art history, because conveying her own excitement enables students to engage in the subject.

To her, the most rewarding aspect of her introductory course is when students who were dreading their art requirement say that they enjoyed the course or that a certain topic appealed to them. “If I can change a few minds about the value of studying art, I think I served my purpose in that regard,” Bender said. “Once one engages students and builds enthusiasm, they are more likely to travel with you into more difficult territory, and when that happens, students are challenged to extensively consider artistic production and its place in history and the world.”

Bender said she strives to keep students engaged by relinquishing control and changing the way they look at things. Therefore, she tries not to lecture for the entire class period, but rather gives students time to discuss and debate particular subjects. For example, in her Approaches to the Built Environment class, Bender taught a unit where the class looked at case studies. During one class period, she broke the students into groups where they discussed Richard Serra’s controversial Tilted Arc. Bender instructed the students to imagine themselves in the era when the piece was created and decide whether they
would allow the work to remain on display.

Her goal by the end of a semester-long class is for timid students to participate in class discussions with the students who had possessed the confidence to contribute all along. “A teacher’s job is to broaden that circle of conversation every week,” Bender said. “By the end of the semester, I want every student to jump off the deep end at least once and throw his or her ideas out there for everybody to hear.”

Bender changes her Introduction to World Art course every semester in order to retain both the students’ and her own interest in the material. She introduces new subjects every semester so there is an “increasing circulation of materials and objects.”

However, Bender didn’t always understand that covering every aspect of the subject matter wasn’t necessary. When she first started teaching in 2002, Bender said she tried to teach too much material and attempted to work as fast as she could. By the end of her first semester, she realized a change was necessary. “If I was going to flail as a professor, I was going to flail on my own terms,” Bender said. “I radically rethought the course and jumped off the edge a little bit. I decided to cease to use lecture notes, to move around the class, and to engage them more.”

Students should understand “they’re empowered to interpret the objects based on their own perspective,” Bender said, adding that art history is an “active production of meaning and questions.”

Bender said the students’ newfound knowledge of the historical context of the art helps shape their perspective. While she realizes all opinions are not equally informed and articulate, she said students’ perspectives can “contribute important insights into the conversation.” “However, it’s my job to ensure this perspective is informed by knowledge of this object’s past and the prior narratives that have shaped its history,” Bender said.
Although Joseph Grabowski, Chemistry, usually teaches the same courses each term, he never approaches them from the same perspective because he is constantly learning about what works and what doesn’t inside the classroom.

Grabowski teaches both Honors and mainstream undergraduate Organic Chemistry, several special topics graduate chemistry courses and a freshman programs course.

Grabowski explains that when he was a student, there was no active learning in the classroom. Professors would lecture for the duration of the class while writing notes on the chalkboard; there were no animations, small groups, or recitations. “For the great majority of students, that doesn’t engage them; it doesn’t lead to long term retention or transfer of concepts from one discipline to another. It doesn’t lead to satisfaction and it doesn’t lead to positive outlooks,” explained Grabowski. Therefore, to thoroughly engage students in the content of his courses, Grabowski incorporates the concept of active learning into the classroom.

“I use PowerPoint, animations, 3D visualizations, and I spend most of my time behind the students or next to them looking over their shoulders and not with my back to them, constantly writing on the board. I am always thinking about how to improve teaching based upon improvements in technology and, more important, our understanding of how students learn,” said Grabowski.

Grabowski tries to make every minute and every activity relevant to the long-term goals of a course, which involve learning a core set of knowledge in such a way that the students understand it and have not merely memorized their way through it. “Behind the content is a bigger idea that if students learn how to manipulate this messy, massive content of organic chemistry, they can apply this same set of skills to something like managing patients, who are messy and not as uniform. It sets the students up for the more complicated realities, where everybody and every situation are not as uniform as one would hope,” said Grabowski.

Grabowski finds that since a considerable number of students enter college with a negative experience of group work from high school, it can be challenging to encourage students to listen to and learn from one another. To help his sophomore Organic Chemistry students overcome this issue, Grabowski designates one-fifth of the course points as collaborative points. This consists of a challenging, take-home exam given in eleven parts throughout the semester with the cumulative value adding up to twenty percent of the total course points. Students are welcome to work with anybody within the course on these questions. “It is an effective process because it promotes student dialogue about the course content in a meaningful way,” said Grabowski.

While he acknowledges that in the end, it is self motivation that ultimately drives students to work hard, Grabowski tries to set up multiple ways for students to succeed. Although he used to assign four in-class exams, Grabowski found that some students perform better with less time constraint. Therefore, one of these exams is now take-home.

“The take-home exam allows me to include more challenging questions—questions that really stretch the students—questions that you can’t put on an in-class exam because of time limits. I hope that trying to provide different opportunities for students to succeed in the course motivates them; I hope they can see that they don’t have to do everything just one way,” said Grabowski.
Many new teaching assistants are facing a classroom full of undergraduates for the first time, and the Teaching Assistant (TA) Services consultants in the Center for Instructional Development & Distance Education (CIDDE) offer a wide range of support. For example, the New Teaching Assistant Orientation provides many practical aspects of teaching, such as dealing with difficult situations, using technology effectively, and academic integrity issues. However, this orientation is merely the beginning: TA Services consultants are available throughout the year to help. Services include classroom videotaping and a confidential follow-up consultation where you will view, analyze, and discuss your teaching methodology with an experienced teaching consultant.

A new lineup of workshops is being introduced this spring. The “Teaching Portfolio Workshop” will focus on key elements to include in a teaching statement and portfolio. The new “Mentoring Workshop” provides training on how to share teaching experiences and advice, as well as technical expertise, with other graduate student teachers. Are you having difficulty getting your students to join classroom discussions? The “Classroom Participation and Leading Discussions Workshop” is designed to help you identify the causes of failed activities as well as determine strategies for improving student participation. One of the more daunting tasks you may face as a teacher is to prepare to teach a six-week course. The “Teaching a 6-week Course Workshop” is designed to identify optimal teaching strategies and efficient ways to test and provide feedback in a short time frame.

More information on TA Services can be obtained at the CIDDE Web site, www.cidde.pitt.edu. You may contact us directly at 412-624-6671, stop by our office at 624 Alumni Hall, or e-mail us at TAHELP@cidde.pitt.edu.

Sarah Coddington is a graduate student in Psychology. Her primary research interests focus on the mechanisms of nicotine addiction. Sarah has served as a teaching fellow, teaching independently, and as a teaching assistant, teaching labs. As a teaching fellow at TA Services, Sarah enjoys working with other TAs to assist them in improving their classroom performance, developing teaching philosophy statements, and assembling teaching portfolios.

Chris Mercer is a PhD Student in Anthropology. He has experience in the development of cross-community forums for the teaching of history in elementary schools in Northern Ireland, and he has served as a teaching assistant mentor and teaching fellow in the Department of Anthropology. Chris looks forward to assisting you with any difficult situations you may encounter and with increasing the level of student participation in your classroom.
Difficult situations are more common in the classroom than one might think. The most common mistake some instructors make, especially at the beginning of their teaching careers, is thinking that the conflict they experience in the classroom is unique. Luckily, this is not true in most cases. A good number of the difficult situations arise around a certain set of issues. Knowing these issues and ways to deal with them helps to resolve the conflict and turn a sensitive situation into a valuable learning experience.

In some courses, conflict is a part of a learning process—instructors who teach courses on controversial issues may actually plan and even provoke a heated argument as a learning tool. However, very often conflicts arise unexpectedly over issues that cannot be predicted. Usually, spontaneous conflicts in the classroom occur for one of the two reasons: misunderstanding of the instructor's intentions and social and/or ideological disagreement.

In the first case, a disagreement may manifest itself in behavior offensive to the instructor; in the second case, the conflict may show itself through hostility, anger and alienation. The instructor should be prepared to deal with these types of difficult situations since, if left unresolved, they may threaten to change the atmosphere of the class to such an extent that effective learning (and sometimes teaching) is no longer possible.

Preventing Difficult Situations

The first step in dealing with conflicts in the classroom is to prevent them from happening. In order to avoid possible misunderstanding of class assessment policies, it is helpful to develop clear course expectations, describe them in a syllabus and use them as a basic criterion in grading (for help in writing a syllabus).

It also helps to include in the syllabus a grading rubric for homework and papers. If an instructor does not have a uniform grading rubric for all of the written assignments the students are to submit, he or she needs to be very clear on expectations and grading policies when introducing a particular assignment. It may help to distribute a grading rubric together with the assignment. In this case an instructor will have a point of reference if students have questions about how the work was graded.

It is important to be consistent in grading the students' assignments as well. If a class has several graders, the instructor should make sure that all of the homework is assessed in a similar way.

It is much more difficult to prevent difficult situations that are provoked by conflicting ideological or social views. However, early in the class the instructor can lay ground rules for discussions. It is important to emphasize that all the arguments should not be personal and should be conducted in a respectful way.

In general, creating a positive environment in the classroom helps prevent emotional conflicts and facilitates learning. Students who do not feel alienated are less likely to exhibit aggressive or provocative behavior in class. To enhance social unity, an instructor can do several things. First, learning students' names as soon as possible facilitates "personalization" for the students. Second, introducing students to each other also promotes a sense of community in the classroom. To do this, the instructor can use simple pair/partner exercises or introduce more complex group learning techniques into the class structure. (For a reference on group work, see http://ctl.stanford.edu/handouts/PDF/small_group_ex.pdf or http://ftad.osu.edu/Publications/keypoints.html.) Third, establishing formal social interaction with the students may help reduce the possibility that conflicts will grow beyond a reasonable level.

Managing Difficult Situations

Naturally, despite efforts to prevent difficult situations from occurring, they still may arise. In this case, it is very important
for the instructor to manage the conflict and not let it get out of control. Do not avoid the issue—such a tactic may lead to the situation escalating even further.

The first step in conflict management requires taking control of your own emotions. Take a moment. Breathe deeply. Collect yourself. Take several minutes if you need to. Silence may be very useful; it will permit the students time to think about the problem. Hold steady. If you do not show signs that you are stressed by the conflict, the students will be better able to steady themselves as well.

Think of possible outcomes. Try to see whether it is possible to turn the conflict into a learning opportunity for the class. Evaluate the situation and identify the possible reasons it occurred: is it a misunderstanding of the class policies or a conflict of personal beliefs? React to students’ comments. Try to detach students from the issue; try to separate the issue from emotions and personalities involved. Focus on the structure of the argument, assumptions and factual errors. Use logic to discuss the issue rationally.

Try to read the student’s body language for evidence of anger, aggravation, embarrassment or irritation—correctly identifying the student’s feelings will help to separate emotions from the issue. Watch your body language as well: convey your receptiveness. It helps to maintain an “open” posture: relax your body, keep your arms away from your chest, face the student directly. Maintain a distance of at least four feet; a closer proximity may be threatening, especially when you are standing and the student is sitting. Maintain eye contact and be attentive. If you cannot find a workable position to address the issue in the moment, defer. Tell the class that this is an important issue and you will return to it later. This will give you time to develop a strategy. However, do not defer and drop the issue—come back to it in the next class. This will convey to the students that you take them seriously and there is no issue that is not significant to you.

### Learning from Difficult Situations

Make sure that when you teach the course next time, you consider former difficult situations. Perhaps in the aftermath of the conflict you will see that it could have been prevented or handled in a better way. Use your experience to improve your teaching.

In general, know yourself: what pushed your buttons? What issues are you overly sensitive about? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you to develop strategies to manage yourself and the class in a difficult situation.

Do not take any conflict personally. The conflict is not directed against you per se; even if a certain remark comes as a personal attack, it is directed against you as an instructor, not as a person. Also, very often students direct their aggravation arising from personal problems against their instructors.

Do not be afraid to talk over the conflict with your colleagues or faculty advisors. Chances are they were in similar situations before and can share advice. Also, ask for advice from TA Services at CIDDE.

### References:

- **TA Handbook, University of Pittsburgh.** [www.cidde.pitt.edu/ta/ta_handbook](http://www.cidde.pitt.edu/ta/ta_handbook)
- **Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom, Harvard University.** [http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/hotmoments.html](http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/hotmoments.html)
- **Managing Classroom Conflict, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.** [http://cfe.unc.edu/pdfs/FYC22.pdf](http://cfe.unc.edu/pdfs/FYC22.pdf)
- **When New Teachers Meet the Classroom Terrorist, Cornell University.** [http://teaching.berkeley.edu/classroomproblem.html](http://teaching.berkeley.edu/classroomproblem.html)
- **Stress on campuses also on the rise, Ami Albernez.** [www.masspsy.com/leading/1.10_stress_campuses.html](http://www.masspsy.com/leading/1.10_stress_campuses.html)
Research in the fields of education, neurobiology and psychology informs our understanding of how students learn. Yet there is a gap between what we know about learning and what we do about it when we’re teaching. The seminar will focus on all aspects of how people learn: cognitive science, learning theory, and application in the classroom. Our discussion will focus on practical implications of the research on students’ learning, especially on teaching techniques that address a variety of students.

In this Summer Institute seminar, Dean Alan Lesgold, School of Education, will provide an introduction to the topic. Several learning theory principles will be highlighted with faculty presenters then describing effective ways they have applied cognitive research to their classroom teaching. Participants will have breakout time to begin developing their own teaching activities that correlate with the principles discussed in the seminar.

Presenters:

**Dean Alan Lesgold, School of Education**
Prior to becoming the School of Education dean, Dr. Lesgold served as executive associate director of Pitt’s Learning Research and Development Center. He founded and directed Pitt’s interdisciplinary doctoral program in cognitive science and artificial intelligence. Currently, he serves as chair of the National Academies’ Committee on the Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy.

**Jennifer Cartier, School of Education**
Dr. Cartier is an assistant professor of science education in the School of Education’s Department of Instruction and Learning, and has been recognized for her ability to teach a broad range of students in a variety of situations, designing courses in pedagogy, curriculum theory, and science education that actively engage students with both science content and scientific inquiry processes. She is a 2009 Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award recipient.

**Sam Donovan, Department of Biological Sciences**
Dr. Donovan is a Research Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences in the School of Arts and Sciences, and is the Director of Undergraduate Programs for the BioQUEST Curriculum Consortium – a 25 year national reform effort in biology education. He is currently involved as a director, advisory board member, or consultant, in over a dozen science education projects and specializes in teaching evolution and using Web-based collaboration tools.

**Richard Henker, School of Nursing**
Dr. Henker is Professor and Vice Chair in the Acute and Tertiary Care Department in the School of Nursing, and has been on faculty since 1993. During that time he has taught a variety of courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. More recently, he has been involved in teaching anesthesia students in the human simulation laboratory and as a Nurse Anesthetist preceptor at UPMC-Presbyterian. He is a 2006 Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award recipient.

*Enrollment is limited. April 30 is the last day to enroll.*
Course Development
May 1 through August 15

This opportunity provides individual course development support for those who wish to develop or revise a course. CIDDE Instructional Services staff will work directly with you, according to your summer schedule, to help meet your course design goals. CIDDE can assist you to develop/revise any of the following:

- Course syllabus
- Learning outcomes
- Effective teaching activities that engage students
- New teaching methods/strategies
- Assessments, including test items, projects, and assignments.

Enrollment is limited to 20. July 30 is the last day to enroll.

Summer Institute: Part III

Special Lecture: Copyright Conundrums: Where we are Today
by Tracy Mitrano, Cornell University

June 3, 11 a.m.
532 Alumni Hall

Tracy Mitrano is director of IT Policy and of Computer Policy and Law Programs for the Office of Information Technologies at Cornell University. She has served on the EDUCAUSE Board of Directors as treasurer, secretary, and vice president and speaks often on contemporary issues involving technology, law, and policy in teaching and learning. A member of the Frye Institute faculty, Mitrano received a Ph.D. in American history from Binghamton University and a J.D. from Cornell Law School. She is an adjunct assistant professor of Information Science at Cornell.

In her talk, entitled: Copyright Conundrums: Where Are We Today, Dr. Mitrano will discuss some of the issues that new technologies have raised with copyright law, with attention to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act’s (DMCA) fair use provisions and the TEACH Act, as well as the special challenges that these issues have for higher education in pursuit of its missions.

Enrollment is limited. May 27 is the last day to enroll.

Online registration will soon be available at www.cidde.pitt.edu/fds/sidi. If you have questions about this event, please contact Michelle Lane-Ogden, CIDDE’s Faculty Development Coordinator at mlane@pitt.edu or 412-383-9729.

Upcoming Events for 2010 Spring Term

Workshops For Faculty
Best Practices in Online Teaching
815 Alumni Hall
April 14, noon–1 p.m.

Teaching a 6-week Course
815 Alumni Hall
April 6, 3–4:30 p.m.

Mentoring
815 Alumni Hall
April 9, 1–2:30 p.m.

Workshops For Teaching Assistants

To Enroll: Go to www.cidde.pitt.edu to register online. To request additional information about workshops or arrange a departmental demonstration please contact Michelle Lane-Ogden at mlane@pitt.edu or call 412-383-9727. Disclaimer: Please note that training dates and times are subject to change, so please be sure to check the CIDDE Web site (www.cidde.pitt.edu) before signing up.
For nearly 18 years, *Teaching Times* newsletter has been delivered to mailboxes of all full-time and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at the University. In order to be more environmentally responsible, contain costs, and provide our readers with expanded online resources, we have initiated plans to move the *Teaching Times* to digital publication, with the ability for readers to print only what they want to have on paper.

This current copy will be the last printed issue of the newsletter. A postcard will announce the official release date of the online version, but in the meantime, please subscribe to *Teaching Times Online* by visiting the Center for Instructional Development & Distance Education (CIDDE) Web site at: www.cidde.pitt.edu and clicking on the *Teaching Times* subscribe button, located on the News & Events page.

We hope you will find that the new digital version of the newsletter will be more interactive and user-friendly, allowing CIDDE staff to update information quickly and share additional resources of interest. The archive of back issues (1998–present) will continue to be available from the *Teaching Times* link on the CIDDE website.