

SYNERGIA

1. The interaction of two or more forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.

Vol. 25, No. 4

April/May 2007

Building Sustainability into the Curriculum



by Elise Amel,
Psychology Department

As indicated in the UST mission and vision statements, our goal is to prepare students to effectively lead regarding the major issues in their lives, community and world. One issue that will affect every aspect of the lives of our students is *sustainability*.

The Center for Faculty Development has been sponsoring an initiative this year on Teaching for Global Citizenship. The Center has held several workshops during the year on relational and intercultural teaching strategies that encourage students to think critically about U.S. culture in the world. One area that needs this kind of critical examination is the unsustainable nature of American life. As a group we have been slow to acknowledge our role in creating current environmental problems such as Global Climate Change and even slower to commit to living sustainably as a means of ameliorating its effects.

We will live up to our mission if we help students make the connection between their major fields of study and their role in creating a sustainable society. One can imagine the scope of environmental literacy to include not only understanding the biology, chemistry and physics of ecosystems and energy sources, but also fostering connection to nature through literature, theology, and mathematics, inspiring mindful behavior through social sciences, and understanding the many ways in which business, economics, engineering, and ethics intersect with nature.

There are many means of influencing sustainability. We can *model* sustainability through our own and departmental behavior. For instance, the UST Geography department is going carbon neutral (first minimizing the amount of carbon created and then offsetting the remainder through various means such as tree planting and investing in alternative energy sources) this year. We can *support* each other by sharing, formally and informally, what we've done with others. As an example of helping others in one's discipline infuse their curriculum with sustainability content, Britain Scott has co-authored

INSIDE ...

IDEAS FROM THE DIRECTOR	4
CATHOLIC STUDIES SEMINAR	5
BROOKFIELD WORKSHOPS	6
FACULTY GRANTS OFFICE	8
FD GRANT DEADLINES	9
HECUA INTERCULTURAL SEMINAR	10
WEB AND MEDIA SERVICES	11
HEALTH INSURANCE FOR STUDENTS	14
SYMERIC CONFERENCE ..	BACK PAGE



Amel *cont.* the “Teaching Psychology for Sustainability” site,

Leave the world better than you found it. *Paul Hawken*

www.teachgreenpsych.com. Moreover, we can create a strong *culture* through our curriculum. Many UST faculty already teach about sustainability. We also have a vibrant and expanding Environmental Studies program. Other schools, however, have long track-records of fostering the discussion of sustainability across disciplines (for examples see Northern Arizona University, <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/ponderosa/> and Emory University, www.scienceandsociety.emory.edu/piedmont/curriculum.htm).

Perhaps, like me, many of you have been thinking about sustainability for some time now, changing your own lifestyles, perhaps even conducting research, but have felt time pressures or content restrictions that have left the topic of sustainability virtually untouched in courses.

Perhaps I shouldn't admit this in writing, but I have integrated sustainability-related examples and activities into my courses in a fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants (to use a technical term) way over the years. For instance, in general psychology I've turned a discussion of learning theories into a group task to design materials and policies for a recycling campaign. In research methods I've used research materials my colleagues and I designed for the Living Green Expo to illustrate how and why one should pilot test survey questions. Yet, I've been yearning for time and the mental space to think more comprehensively (e.g., creating a thread that runs through the whole course), strategically (e.g.,

fostering student critical thinking about behavior related to the environment), and systematically (e.g., creating meaningful learning objectives and assessment tools) about integrating sustainability into my courses.

This yearning inspired a trip to Emory University in Atlanta (buying carbon offsets for my flight, of course) to seek out program materials and best practices. I attended a workshop sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (we are now a member institution so I encourage you to check out their website for resources www.aashe.org). As a result I have a vision for a summer faculty seminar to facilitate integrating sustainability throughout the curriculum. The seminar would provide resources, time to think, opportunities to talk with colleagues across disciplines, and some good food to eat. This seminar would respect your expertise, knowing that you alone know best what to do in your own classes. By the end of the three seminar meetings, you would have designed a usable set of materials (usually, participants find a way to include sustainability or environmental issues in new courses, units in a course, new course readings, or new assignments) that make the concept of *environment* clearly relevant to your course content.

... Ensuring that subsequent generations inherit a tomorrow that is at least as good as today, preferably better. *Sustainable Seattle*

I think this kind of seminar is essential for accomplishing the goals that Jim Farrell of St. Olaf states so well, those of, “showing students that environmental concerns aren't limited to



faculty and courses in Environmental Studies, and that environmental issues are—requirement or not—an essential part of the general education of this generation of college students.”

If this kind of seminar sounds appealing to you, please contact me so that I have some idea about demand for workshops of this type.

Amel *cont.*

How others at UST have done it:

Britain Scott, Associate Professor of Psychology

Last year Britain offered a special topics course, Ecopsychology, with a spring break embedded experiential component. Students responded enthusiastically to this embedded piece which included, among other things, camping at Wolf Ridge in northern Minnesota and visits to the homes of people living sustainable lifestyles off-grid.

Mary Rose O'Reilley, Professor Emeritus of English

“For most of my time at UST, I included texts like Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience* and David Abrams’ *The Spell of the Sensuous* in my freshman syllabus, along with idiosyncratic documents like the Fioretti (miracle legends of St. Francis) to help students grasp the tradition, spiritual base—and difficulties—of an ecological perspective. I also taught several upper division courses in such topics as “Writing Nature.”

Lynn Hartshorn, Associate Professor of Chemistry

Students in General Chemistry learn about various forms of energy. They study the reactions involved in the combustion of fossil fuels, and the contributions of these reactions to global warming. We discuss the advantages and disadvantages of alternative energy sources. We also discuss the contribution that each student makes to carbon dioxide emissions in their daily lives.

Dr. AnnMarie Thomas, a new faculty member in the School of Engineering, is starting a lab focused on “Design for an Aging Population.” As the average age of the U.S. population rises, so does the demand for new services and products. This poses an environmental challenge, as many new products are not designed with their environmental lifecycle in mind. Dr. Thomas, working with students and local eldercare facilities, is looking at how to use engineering to improve quality of life for the elderly in an environmentally responsible fashion.

IDEAS FROM THE DIRECTOR



by Rob Riley

Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.¹

Parker Palmer says a lot of things about teaching that resonate with me, particularly after six years' experience as the Director of the Center for Faculty Development. Not just the quote from him above, but much more.

For example, he discusses the challenges that he faces even after three decades of teaching at the university level; he notes that, while he has mastered a range of techniques and pedagogies, each and every class requires a renewed commitment to learning and discovery. He writes of the attendant frustrations that sometimes add up to at least the fleeting thought that perhaps he needs to find a new career. In the end, however, he remains committed to and passionate about the vocation of the teacher.

I have written in this column before that great teaching is about more than just “nuts and bolts” like a well-crafted syllabus or properly-designed exams. While these and good techniques are necessary ingredients, they are not enough. In the end, a commitment and passion about the engagement that takes place in the classroom, broadly defined, are needed. Without them we

do middling work. Our students notice it. So do most of our colleagues.

These are never done tasks. I always struggle with how much algebra to use in my introductory economics courses, or how to best weave in the real-world issues that intrigue our students. I am not always confident that I have the right ways to develop the intuition behind the theory, or to illustrate the most important principles. I am not always confident that I model the passion that I still feel for learning and thinking and intellectual discovery; I am not able to always deal with the frustration that accompanies my realization that not all of my students share that passion. But, like Parker Palmer, I am always eager to try it again at the start of a fall semester.

Sometimes we need to explore those new opportunities that will energize us, and reinvigorate our fervor for learning, sharing ideas, and engaging the issues. These are too numerous to enumerate here (the lead column of this issue of Synergia provides another possibility). What appeals to some will not appeal to others. But taking advantage of these possibilities is important, as doing the same, standard 3-3 load for thirty years will likely not be sustainable for most of us. Our students will enjoy the classroom experience as little as we do if we burn out on that routine.

I have been fortunate to observe a lot of teaching by others, and to participate in workshops or conversations about what makes for effective teaching. I am often humbled by what I see and hear, as there are many outstanding faculty members at St. Thomas. I have

sometimes been irritated or have felt let down by those few individuals who see the teaching as an almost “necessary evil” for what they really want to be doing. Regardless, I have learned a tremendous amount about how to do the stuff of the classroom, and about my own commitment to what we do as scholars and teachers. There are too many people to thank in this regard to do so here.

I have learned more than I thought possible from those individuals I have worked with over the past six years as Director (Nancy Hartung, Pam Nice, Pat Alexander, and many members of the Faculty Development Committee over time, among others), so thanks also to them not just for their work but for inspiration that was sometimes sorely needed.

Some people have asked if I am looking toward the return to full-time teaching next year with trepidation now that I have reached the end of my term limit as Director. That question surprises me, as I would think that the answer would be clearly no. Returning to regular faculty duties seems like a kind of homecoming more than anything else.

¹ From *The Courage to Teach*, Parker J. Palmer, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998, p. 10.



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Civic Learning at the Intersections: U.S. Diversity, Global Education, and Democracy's Unfinished Work

Network for Academic Renewal Conference

October 18-20, 2007

Denver, Colorado

Deadline for submission of proposals: **Thursday, April 12, 2007**

This conference will highlight current research and promising practices pertaining to the creative integration of civic, diversity, and global work on campus and how this integration can strengthen student learning and help create new and sustaining institutional structures. To learn more about the conference go to their website at: www.aacu.org.

UST CATHOLIC STUDIES SUMMER SEMINAR

Catholicism and Literature

June 11-15, 2007

9 a.m. – noon

Led by Dr. Joseph Pearce, Associate Professor of Literature

Ava Maria University, Naples, Florida

The seminar will focus on the Catholic Literary Review in England in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, exploring its roots, its manifestations and the huge impact it had on contemporary culture. Interested faculty should contact Kathy Fell (kmfell) to register.

Synergia is published by

The Center for Faculty Development

University of St. Thomas

Pamela Nice, Editor

Rob Riley, Director

Pamela Nice, Associate Director

Nancy Hartung, New Faculty Liaison

Patricia Alexander, Administrative Assistant

Sara Abdelaal, Student Assistant

Rob Riley: 962-5687

Pamela Nice: 962-6020

Nancy Hartung: 962-5226

Pat Alexander: 962-6022

The lobby area and resource room of the Center will be open from 8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. M-F. Please stop by!

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT APRIL WORKSHOPS

Led by Dr. Stephen Brookfield*

E-mail pmalexander@stthomas.edu to register

Workshop registration is limited to faculty unless otherwise noted.

DISCUSSION WORKSHOPS

Dealing With Common Problems in Discussion

St. Paul Campus

Wednesday, April 4

3:30-4:30 pm

Murray-Herrick 155

Registration Deadline: March 30, 2007

Minneapolis Campus

Friday, April 20, 2007

2:30 – 3:30 pm

MOH 450

Registration Deadline: April 13, 2007

In this open-ended conversation Stephen Brookfield will explore with participants the most common problems they

face in using discussion and how to respond to these. Typical problems raised are no-one speaking, 1 or 2 people making 90% of the comments, the teacher talking too much (or too little), the discussion going way off track, people making factually/conceptually wrong statements, people giving a series of monologues rather than having an interconnected conversation, and people's ideas becoming more entrenched after a discussion supposed to shake up their fixed ways of thinking.

Brookfield will draw from his book *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* (co-authored with Stephen Preskill) in examining different responses to these situations.

RACE WORKSHOP

Teaching About Race: Common Mistakes of White Professors

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

3:30-4:30 pm

Murray-Herrick 155

Registration Deadline: April 13, 2007

Race is a reality that Whites can no longer say applies only to the "Other," and White privilege is something that some Whites have only recently come to acknowledge and challenge on a wide basis. A desire to teach about race, reduce racism, and honor diverse races, heritages and traditions is now extolled as a worthy project, indeed a necessity, for White teachers in many disciplines.

As many Whites who have tried this know, such teaching is fraught with contradictions and missteps, ending up with teachers themselves being accused of racism, and raw emotions being exposed in ways that cause some teachers to

vow never to try this again. This workshop will examine 10 common mistakes White teachers make in teaching about race. Some of them are basic (excusing oneself from complicity in racism, saying you understand oppression, asking a student to give the "Black," "Asian" or "First Nations" perspective). Some are more subtle, such as the danger of repressive tolerance (appearing to open up a curriculum while simultaneously closing it down).

The ten mistakes are chosen because the workshop leader – Stephen Brookfield – has made all of them and has seen all of them made by White colleagues. This workshop does not pretend to offer any simple solutions for teaching about race, since there aren't any. But it will try to alert White professors to what awaits them when they try to do the right thing for the right reasons – and feel that it's gone seriously wrong. *(Open to faculty and staff.)*

BOOK PROPOSAL WORKSHOPS

Developing Book Proposals for Scholarly Publishers

Tuesday, April 10

3:30-4:30 pm

Murray-Herrick 155

Registration Deadline: April 3, 2007

Book Proposal Working Session (participants bring proposals in process to discuss)

Tuesday, April 17

3:30-4:30 pm

Murray-Herrick 155

Registration Deadline: April 10, 2007

Publishing a book represents, for many faculty, the ultimate scholarly challenge. In fact the prestige surrounding book publishing may be so intimidating that it prevents faculty from even drafting a proposal, let alone approaching prospective publishers. In these 2 workshops Stephen Brookfield will draw on his experience as an author and editor of 10 books to outline the main elements of a book proposal.

* **Stephen Brookfield** is Distinguished University Professor at the University of St. Thomas. He has published 10 books with 4 different publishers and is a 4-time winner of the Cyril Houle World Award for Literature in Adult Education. His work has been translated into Chinese, German and Finnish. In 2002 he spent a semester as Visiting Professor at Harvard University. He is co-author of *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (Jossey-Bass/John Wiley, 2005), on which these workshops will be based.

Workshop (1) *Developing Book Proposals for Scholarly Publishers*

In this first workshop, Brookfield will talk about the process of approaching publishers and writing a preliminary proposal. He will bring examples of some of his successful book proposals to distribute to participants and outline the chief steps in preparing a proposal. Faculty are encouraged to bring ideas or specific questions to discuss with Brookfield.

Workshop (2) *Book Proposal Working Session*

This follow-up workshop is a working session designed to help faculty move forward in their development of academic book proposals. Participants are asked to bring fledgling proposals and ideas to this workshop to share with other participants.

Participants can take both of these workshops, or just attend one if that suits their interests better.

NEWS FROM THE FACULTY GRANTS OFFICE www.stthomas.edu/fgo 651-962-6038

Faculty and staff interested in applying to a state or federal agency should consult the Faculty Grants Office website for links to powerful search engines designed to help you find the most appropriate agency and program. Some programs of particular note include the following (see FGO website for links to these programs):

Course, Curriculum, and Laboratory Improvement (Phase 1)

National Science Foundation

The Course, Curriculum, and Laboratory Improvement (CCLI) program seeks to improve the quality of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education for all undergraduate students. The program supports efforts to create new learning materials and teaching strategies, develop faculty expertise, implement educational innovations, assess learning and evaluate innovations, and conduct research on STEM teaching and learning. The program supports three types of projects representing three different phases of development, ranging from small, exploratory investigations to large, comprehensive projects.

Due: May 8, 2007

Faith and Community: A Dialogue

U.S. Department of State

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, announces an open competition for multiple grants to support international exchange projects under the rubric "Faith and Community: A Dialogue." This is a continuation of the Office of Citizen Exchanges' "Religion and

Society: A Dialogue" initiative, conducted over the past several fiscal years. Applicants may submit proposals to develop and implement multi-phased exchanges involving the travel of clerics, scholars of religion, educators, and community leaders/activists from countries with significant Muslim populations to the United States and of reciprocal visits by American clerics, scholars of religion, and community leaders/activists.

Due: May 8, 2007

Geophysics

National Science Foundation

Supports basic research in the physics of the solid earth to explore its composition, structure, and processes. Laboratory, field, theoretical, and computational studies are supported. Topics include seismicity, seismic wave propagation, and the nature and occurrence of earthquakes; the earth's magnetic, gravity, and electrical fields; the earth's thermal structure; and geodynamics.

Due: June 1, 2007

Ecological Biology

National Science Foundation

The Ecological Biology Cluster supports research on natural and managed ecological systems, primarily in terrestrial, wetland, and freshwater habitats. Research areas include experimental, observational, theoretical, and modeling studies on the structure and function of complex associations that focus on biotic components, and the coupling of small-scale systems to each other and to large-scale systems. Projects are encouraged that develop conceptual and synthetic linkages among theoretical, modeling, and empirical approaches; that are conducted at one or more scales of



ecological or geographic organization; and that synthesize empirical and theoretical findings into new paradigms.

Due: July 9, 2007

Sociology Program

National Science Foundation

The Sociology Program supports basic research on all forms of human social organization — societies, institutions, groups and demography — and processes of individual and institutional change. The Program encourages theoretically focused empirical investigations aimed at improving the explanation of fundamental social processes. Included is research on organizations and organizational behavior, population dynamics, social movements, social groups, labor force participation, stratification and mobility, family, social networks, socialization, gender roles, and the sociology of science and technology.

Due: August 15, 2007

Research Experiences for Undergraduates

National Science Foundation

The Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program

supports active research participation by undergraduate students in any of the areas of research funded by the National Science Foundation. REU projects involve students in meaningful ways in ongoing research programs or in research projects designed especially for the purpose. This solicitation features two mechanisms for support of student research: (1) REU Sites are based on independent proposals to initiate and conduct projects that engage a number of students in research. REU Sites may be based in a single discipline or academic department, or on interdisciplinary or multi-department research opportunities with a coherent intellectual theme. 2) REU Supplements may be requested for ongoing NSF-funded research projects or may be included as a component of proposals for new or renewal NSF grants or cooperative agreements.

Due: August 15, 2007 tentative

Faculty Humanities Workshops

National Endowment for the Humanities

Grants for Faculty Humanities Workshops support local and regional professional development programs for K-12 teachers and faculty at post-secondary institutions by providing

such faculty with the opportunity to engage in vigorous intellectual inquiry with visiting scholars on significant topics in the humanities. Projects for college and university faculty members should reflect and respond to institutional priorities and initiatives. These workshops enable a core group of faculty to pursue collaborative humanistic inquiry at a level that could not be accomplished with existing institutional resources.

Due: September 17, 2007

Summer Stipends Program

National Endowment for the Humanities

Recipients usually produce scholarly articles, monographs on specialized subjects, books on broad topics, archaeological site reports, translations, editions, or other scholarly tools. Please note that each university is allowed to submit just two applications to this program each year. The Faculty Grants Office will hold an internal competition during summer 2007 for these two slots. An announcement will appear in the Spring, 2007 issue of *The Grantseeker*, and e-mail solicitations for this program will be sent to faculty in late June, 2007.

Due: Late September or early October, 2007 (anticipated)

APPLICATION DEADLINES FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Note that deadlines are 4 p.m. on dates below. Late applications are not accepted. Bring to Faculty Development Center, OSF Library Suite 403-406 or mail to Mail 4034 in time to reach us by 4 p.m. of the deadline date.

Teaching Enhancement Grant: April 16 (for 07-08 academic year)

Faculty Partnerships: April 16 for Summer (after July 1)

Partnership-in-Learning: April 16 for Summer (after July 1)

Distinguished Visitor Grant: One month prior to visit. No applications accepted between May 15 and August 15.

OF INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

For more information, contact Sarah Stevenson, Director, International Education, 962-6450, sastevenson@stthomas.edu



Summer HECUA Faculty Seminar

Exploring the Intercultural through Experiential Study in the Twin Cities

June 25-June 29, 2007

Deadline for application: June 1, 2007

We speak often of making the global local, but too rarely do we use our local resources to help students understand global systems. Faculty from across the university are invited to participate in a June seminar on the global-local nexus and incorporating the multicultural Twin Cities into our curriculum.

The objectives of the seminar are to

- Gain first-hand knowledge of the Twin Cities community
- Observe how global issues work themselves out locally
- Become more knowledgeable of pedagogical principles/practices in experiential education
- Increase understanding of the ethical and practical considerations in

getting students involved with communities outside the classroom.

The seminar will include pre-workshop reading, exploration of the intercultural dimension of the Twin Cities, site tours to various neighborhoods and organizations, and discussions of ways to integrate off-campus experiences into coherent curricular offerings.

The seminar will involve a day of preparation, three days of site visits and off-campus presentations, and a day of reflection and planning.

Selection: Because of the experiential nature of the seminar, the seminar is limited to 15 participants. Participation from a variety of disciplines is preferred. Faculty will submit a letter

of application outlining their interest in the topic and thoughts about incorporating local experiential opportunities into their teaching or course development. Early application is encouraged; the final deadline is June 1. Letters should be sent to: sastevenson@stthomas.edu or to International Education, 44C, attn: S. Stevenson. Stipends will be made available for participation.

This seminar is co-sponsored by International Education, Service Learning and Faculty Development. The seminar facilitators are from the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA). www.hecua.org

Call for Proposals: Spring-Embedded and Summer 2008 Off-Campus Programs

Deadline: May 1, 2007

All faculty are invited to submit proposals for international or US-based off-campus programs for the spring semester or summer term 2008. Spring semester includes all academic spring break opportunities (e.g. "embedded" programs).

The application deadline is **Tuesday, May 1, 2007**. All proposals are reviewed and approved by the University of St. Thomas Academic

Review Committee for International Education (ARCIE), a standing faculty committee. Faculty are invited by ARCIE to submit proposals for pre-review comments before the final review takes place in May. Proposals for pre-review must be submitted by April 1.

- To view the proposal process for spring and summer off-campus

programs, see the ARCIE web site at www.stthomas.edu/arcie.

- Note: January Term 2008 proposals will be due in mid-October 2007 for both UMAIE-and UST-sponsored programs.
- For information on the short-term program process, contact Sarah E. Spencer, International Education, x2-6452, sespencer@stthomas.edu.

WEB AND MEDIA SERVICES

On the Horizon and Right Now, Social Software in Higher Education

Collaboratively written by staff from Web and Media Services

Although podcasts, blogs, wikis, gaming and virtual worlds, Web conferencing and other social software tools have separate and distinct features, they all share a common purpose: to enable people to connect, communicate and collaborate with each other via the Web.

As higher education seeks to address the impact and influence of social software on teaching, learning and research, the hope is that these tools will "... provide important ways for people to discover each other, make connections, and foster conversations that will grow over time."¹



According to the 2007 Horizon Report: "Collaborative work continues to be a critical component of scholarly activities. The phenomenon of social networking is a direct response to this challenge, as the educational community is finding ways to connect and contribute using social networking tools. Collaborative experiences in virtual worlds, massively multiplayer games, and emerging forms of scholarly work are also on the horizon."²

Below, we highlight several ways in which St. Thomas is exploring the growing interest in various types of social software tools.

Web and video conferencing

In videoconferencing technology, two or more people at different locations can see and hear each other at the same time, sometimes even sharing computer

applications for collaboration.

St. Thomas offers two types of conferencing options: Adobe (Macromedia) Breeze and Internet2 Commons (I2).

Adobe (Macromedia) Breeze Web conferencing software offers a way to bridge the physical and virtual classroom space by using audio and video, chat tools, and application and file sharing. Virtual meeting spaces can be used for lectures, discussions, tutoring, collaborative workspace, and for a variety of real-time, interactive activities. A Breeze meeting can be held anywhere a computer and Internet access is available.

Internet2 (I2) video conferencing provides large-scale deployment of tools for one-to-one, one-to-group, and group-to-group collaborations enabling the I2 research and education community to hold distributed working groups, classes, meetings and events. St. Thomas has two general purpose spaces for video conferencing. In addition, the College of Business and the Law School each have a dedicated room for videoconferencing. For more information see the Dec. 5, 2006 article in *Bulletin Today*.

Podcasting

In the past decade, the experience of "audio or video on a computer" has moved from novel to common. To address how this change in technology and culture is influencing the changing opportunities for teaching and learning, IRT has sponsored a project to investigate podcasting of instructional content. This offers the opportunity for faculty to experiment with various technologies to discover if these technologies prove beneficial for teaching, learning and communicating.

Blogs and wikis

In 2005, the Journal (blog) and Teams (wiki) tools were added to Blackboard course and community sites. Many classes are using the Journal tool for student reflection and the Teams site to facilitate collaboration among students. The Blackboard Teams (Wiki) tool provides a common online workspace inside a Blackboard course where students can collaboratively create, edit and comment on presentations and group projects. Both the Blackboard Journal (Blog) and Teams (Wiki) tools will see improvements in summer 2007.

Recently, IRT implemented Movable Type blog software for public Web logging at St. Thomas. Much of what can be done with Movable Type (easy Web publishing, RSS, scheduling and archiving) can be done with other technologies on campus such as Collage and Blackboard; however, other

functions—such as public commentary, subscription, communication and collaboration between UST and non-UST communities – cannot.

On the horizon: Educational gaming and virtual worlds

“Serious games” are games that are used for an educational purpose rather than for entertainment. Many institutions in higher education, as well as national organizations, are researching the potential that “massively multiplayer online” (MMO) games have for teaching and learning. Research from the Horizon Report² suggests that mainstream adoption of MMO games in higher education is four to five years out.

In the coming year, IRT will continue to partner with interested members of the St. Thomas community to adopt and apply the social networking technologies mentioned above, and

research how these and other educational technologies will impact teaching, learning and scholarship at UST.

Interested in learning more? Please contact your Academic Technology Consultant or the IRT Tech Desk will direct your inquiry. You can contact the IRT Tech Desk at IRTHelp@stthomas.edu or (651) 962-6230.

¹Sreebny, O. (2007, January 16). Digital rendezvous: Social software in higher education. Educause Center for Applied Research. Retrieved February 12, 2007 from www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ecar_so/erb/ERB0702.pdf.

²2007 Horizon Report. New Media Consortium. Retrieved February 12, 2007 from www.nmc.org/pdf/2007_Horizon_Report.pdf.

UST Survey Reveals Trends in Undergraduate Use of Technology

Collaboratively written by staff from Web and Media Services

Students’ preferences, satisfaction and use of information technology in higher education are important and growing areas of research. The student survey conducted by the Educause Center for Applied Research¹ (ECAR) seeks to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by gathering information from a national sample of freshmen and seniors to gain a better understanding of

- student ownership, use and skill with information technology

- preference for technology in courses
- perception of how technology contributes to the academic experience.

Below we highlight some of the key findings from the 2006 study, along with some of the results from the St. Thomas students who participated.

E-mail use is ubiquitous. Nearly all of the ECAR respondents reported they use e-mail and only 11.8 percent indicated they maintain only one e-mail account. When students were asked, “If your institution could communicate with you in any form what would your first preference be?” 85.8 percent of respondents preferred e-mail as their first choice. Nearly 91 percent of St. Thomas respondents preferred e-mail as

their first choice for communicating with the institution. Instant messaging and text messaging were preferred by a small percentage of students as the primary means for official St. Thomas communication.

Students still prefer a moderate amount of technology in their courses. In the 2005 ECAR study, most students indicated they prefer a “moderate” amount of technology in their courses. This trend continues in the 2006 study with 56.2 percent preferring a moderate use of technology. Of the St. Thomas student respondents,

- 64.5 percent preferred a moderate use of technology

- 17.4 percent preferred an extensive use
- 13.6 percent preferred a limited amount of technology in courses.

Although the students in the ECAR study report they are largely neutral with respect to whether they are more engaged in courses that require technology, students agree (more than they disagree) that they are more engaged in courses that require technology than courses that do not. Students also appear satisfied with how well faculty use technology: nearly half of the St. Thomas respondents agreed that faculty use technology well, and 8.8 percent strongly agreed.

Students and learning management systems (Blackboard): Blackboard continues to be widely used, and students' experiences with using Blackboard are positive! Of the 274 St. Thomas freshmen and seniors who participated in the study, 78.5 percent indicated they had taken a course that used Blackboard. Nearly a quarter access Blackboard on a weekly basis, while 29 percent log onto Blackboard

several times a week, and nearly 17 percent access Blackboard daily.

The percentage of UST freshmen and seniors who are positive about using a learning management system increased from the 2005 study: 75 percent of St. Thomas participants described their overall experience with a learning management system as either positive or very positive. In the 2006 study, over 80 percent of UST freshmen and seniors described their experience using Blackboard as positive or very positive.

The features of Blackboard that students find most useful are

- access to the course syllabus
- keeping track of grades on assignments and tests
- links online readings and other course materials.

Interestingly, students report that the features of a learning management system that support student-to-student interactions such as online discussion for posting comments, questions, and responses and sharing materials are less useful to them. One reason may be the

plethora of social networking technologies.

Nearly half of St. Thomas students who participated in the study use online networking technologies such as thefacebook.com on a daily basis. Instant messaging (IM) is also a daily activity among both freshmen and seniors: 62 percent of freshmen and 37 percent of seniors use IM on a daily basis.

Statistics alone are interesting, but the next step is to draw conclusions that will further the mission of teaching and learning at St. Thomas. Clearly, online interactions comprise a growing proportion of students' social lives; we look forward to discovering if the same holds true for students' academic lives, as well.

Interested in learning more? Please contact your Academic Technology Consultant or the IRT Tech Desk will direct your inquiry. You can contact the IRT Tech Desk at IRTHelp@stthomas.edu or (651) 962-6230.

¹ www.educause.edu/ecar

NEW MANDATORY STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE POLICY OFFERS MAJOR SUPPORT FOR OUR STUDENTS



*By Jane Canney
Vice President for
Student Affairs*

In 2004, the American College Health Association conducted a review of the St. Thomas Student Health Service and they recommended implementing mandatory insurance for all full-time students.

Therefore, starting this fall the university will be requiring all undergraduate degree-seeking students taking 12 or more credits and all graduate/professional students taking 9 or more credits to demonstrate health insurance coverage. We know that presently about 90% of our undergraduate and 80% of all graduate students have coverage, so this policy change will only affect some of our students. Most graduate/professional school students take fewer than 9 credits, and therefore will not be affected. However, the full-time students in Law, Social Work, and full-time MBA programs may be significantly affected by this change. Currently, international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa, students participating in intercollegiate athletics, and seminarians are already asked to demonstrate health insurance coverage.

There will be no change in terms of access to the services provided at the Student Health Service. While students will be asked to show their insurance cards at the time of their visits, there will be no co-pays or other new fees. Students that are less than full-time and do not have insurance will still be able to use the Student Health Service and will be charged a fee-for-service.

Students who are not covered by other policies will have the option of purchasing the UST sponsored health insurance policy. The insurance premiums for 2007-2008 have not yet been set, but are expected to be

When uninsured or underinsured students become seriously ill or injured, their academic careers can be drastically affected by substantial healthcare debt or disability. The vast majority of our students have health insurance coverage, but those few who do not carry insurance are at a much greater risk. This is about to change at the University of St. Thomas. Achieving affordability and increasing access to medical care are among our primary goals, and these align appropriately with the institutional strategic priorities of access, excellence and Catholic identity.

In keeping with the university's mission and convictions, the President's Staff and Academic and Administrative Leadership (AAL) have recently approved implementation of mandatory health insurance for all full-time students starting in fall semester, 2007. This step has been taken to protect the welfare of our students and establish a common level of care that will aid them during their academic careers. As faculty members it is important that you are aware of this major change for our students. Although 95% of all private universities/colleges and 25% of all public universities/colleges require mandatory health insurance for students, this has been a different track for the University of St. Thomas.



approximately \$875/year. Dependents can be added to the policy and the costs are factored into the “personal maintenance” budget calculation for financial aid purposes. We are working with our partners in Information Resources & Technology to build a system via Murphy Online that would allow students to easily and confidentially enter their health insurance information.

We will make general announcements about these changes via the Bulletin Today, posters, and mailings to current university students, faculty and staff by the end of this spring semester. Specific instructions on how to provide insurance information will be sent directly to students before the start of the fall semester.

For more information on this university-wide process, please contact the Dean of Students Office at (651) 962-6050.



S.O.S.: Supporting Our Students is a series of student development issues articles provided by the Division of Student Affairs at the University of St. Thomas. For more information on this article or student programs, services and event provided by Student Affairs, please contact the Vice President for Student Affairs office at 962-6120, or www.sttbomas.edu/studentaffairs/officeofvp.asp

CONFERENCE

2007 Symposium on Race, Inclusion, & Culture

Friday, April 20, 2007

8:30-5:00

McNeely Hall, St. Paul Campus

Co-Sponsored by Faculty Development

The Office of Institutional Diversity Symposium on Race, Inclusion, & Culture (SYMRIC) is sponsoring an annual one-day conference engaging professionals and students – across disciplines and practices – on academic, social, cultural, political, and economic matters as they relate to the conference theme. The inaugural conference will explore natural, national, and international disasters from the first half of the first decade (2001-2005). These post-events include 9-11 (2001), U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the University of Michigan Affirmative Action Cases (2003), and Hurricane Katrina (2005). The conference sessions will focus on the events' impacts on access and inclusion issues for higher education.



UNIVERSITY of ST. THOMAS

Faculty Development
Mail 4034
University of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105