

# Synergia

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

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## ADOPTING THE IDEA SYSTEM AND DECIDING HOW BEST TO IMPLEMENT IT AT UST: LET THE YEARLONG DISCUSSION BEGIN!

*By Lisa Lamb, CTE Chair*

Many of you now know that the CTE (Committee on Teaching Evaluation) spearheaded an effort last year that included many faculty across campus and led to the adoption of the IDEA student ratings system at UST beginning this fall. This effort began in earnest in the spring of 2008 and ramped up last year when members of the committee spent 3-6 hours per week all last year researching information, running the pilot and examining other issues related to teaching evaluation. We are especially grateful to the pilot volunteers, including over 1300 students, who used the new system in 54 course sections last fall and to the senators last spring who carefully discussed and considered all aspects of this new system, as well as the old. This was a faculty-led process from the beginning and was motivated not

only by high levels of frustration with the existing system, but also the strong desire of most faculty to continually improve their teaching.

Many of the pilot volunteers were excited by the information they got back from this system and can't wait to use it again with other courses. Some were surprised by what they learned and found that very helpful and interesting. We believe that all of us can benefit from this new system and use it to improve our understanding of our teaching. The CTE was especially excited by all the resources IDEA makes available and the ways in which these are targeted for your course based on your results. It takes some of the guesswork out of improving your teaching and saves you time by suggesting you read a few short papers, not several books!

At the same time, we also recognize that there are many questions still out there about the implementation and use of this new system for faculty evaluation here at UST. We as a faculty need to have discussions about this system and about teaching evaluation at UST this year and decide how best to use this system for summative (evaluative) purposes. The IDEA center recommends that this be a university-wide discussion and CTE

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agreed with this process. We will lead this discussion this fall and we hope that you will participate in it at some level, be it departmental, college/school or university. We are charged with bringing a proposal on the implementation details to the Senate in early October. After participating in an IDEA workshop and holding meetings this summer, the CTE has developed a draft of this proposal. It is available on our Blackboard Site (under Fall 2009 Documents) as well as on the Center for Faculty Development website.

The main gist of the proposal is that we adopt certain procedures that are university-wide while leaving some implementation decisions to individual colleges and schools. Each school or college will develop their own unit plan with

*(Cont. on next page)*

specific implementation guidelines. This is how our current system of faculty evaluation works, and this is important to allow for differences between schools. We need some key procedures to be universal, however, for tenure and promotion purposes, and these are outlined in our draft proposal. These common features are based on keeping some current practices in place while adopting IDEA center recommendations for others. If this proposal is passed by the senate this fall, schools and colleges would have the rest of the school year to determine a specific plan for their unit under the accepted guidelines.

Some common questions include:

1. Who decides which objectives are chosen as Essential or Important?
2. How often should the diagnostic versus short form be used?
3. How will the results be used for summative purposes, for annual evaluation, tenure and promotion?
4. What about laboratory courses or courses with multiple sections?

We have addressed all of these questions in the proposal draft. We have also laid out the required and recommended components of each school or college plan. Please see the Proposal Draft for these details but remember that none of this has been passed yet by the Senate.

The proposal also requests that chairs and deans acknowledge this first year as one of transition. One finding of the pilot is that using the Progress on Objectives portion of the system requires some practice. It

is not a difficult form to use but it does have some potential nuances. We need to educate ourselves and our students if we are to take full advantage of the power of the IDEA system.

This system has been researched and fine-tuned for years and is currently used across the country at a wide range of colleges and universities. We believe it will be quite successful here and help us focus on our main priority: teaching. Please read the draft and join us at an open forum or senate meeting this fall!!



**Fall Faculty Forum**  
"Implementation of IDEA"  
Tuesday, September 22  
12-1:15 p.m.  
3M Auditorium (St. Paul)  
Schultz Auditorium (Mpls)

## PROFILES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

*Two views from faculty who participated in the IDEA pilot project.*



*Andrew Scheiber,  
Professor and Chair  
of English*

### ***Owning Your Objectives***

As a participant in the pilot project for the IDEA forms in Fall 2008, I found the "Objectives" section of the Faculty Information Form the most difficult and alienating component of the protocol. How could I anatomize the ineffable tapestry of

my teaching into essential and non-essential threads?

Once I passed through my initial agonistic relationship with this particular feature of the evaluation protocol, I saw that it reflects a truth we should all be able easily to acknowledge: that not all courses aim primarily at the same kinds of learning. In some courses, the principal objective is the imparting of specific, empirical information; in these courses the introduction of specific concepts or the assignment of team projects is secondary, facilitating the acquisition of information in the factual and empirical sense. In other courses, the relationship among these elements or objectives may be the inverse of what I've just described: the discovery or presentation of empirical knowledge may simply be a means to other ends—of developing collaborative skills, of the ability to grasp and apply specific concepts.

In short, the "Objectives" section asks us to identify the nature or kind of learning benefits that are primary to our pedagogy. Those elements we rate as "minor / of no importance" may still be powerfully present in our classrooms, but in support of those salient priorities or outcomes we deem essential. As disconcerting as I initially found it, filling out the "Objectives" section of the faculty census form helped me be more self-aware and explicit with my students about my priorities in the classroom, and helped set the stage for a more useful, focused set of course evaluations.





*Melissa Loe,  
Mathematics*

***One Constructive way I am  
Using IDEA Feedback***

I took part in the IDEA pilot program last fall, and was really excited about the kind of feedback I was able to get from my students, and the resources from IDEA that helped me respond constructively to that feedback. Here is one example.

How do my students perceive our progress on objectives I've chosen as important or essential in my class? One important IDEA objective in my calculus class last fall was "learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving and decisions)". My progress on this objective was lower than on the other two I had chosen. So I

examined the IDEA teaching methods and styles that are related to this objective. The IDEA report suggested I increase use of "relating course content to real life situations." Accordingly, I downloaded from the IDEA website a paper with suggestions and resources to help me do this more intentionally. This fall in my "Calculus for the Biological Sciences," I am motivating calculus ideas by real questions, examples, tools and techniques that students encounter in their Biology 201 class and lab (which is taken concurrently).

I've enjoyed learning about these applications of calculus to sciences; I am pleased with this improvement to the course; and I expect these will lead to improvements in the *teaching and learning* that occur in my class.



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This will be the last mass mailing of Synergia. In the future, Synergia will be available on the Faculty Development web site. If you would like to receive a hard copy, this is your LAST CHANCE to request one by filling in the information below and mailing it to Faculty Development, Mail 4034, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104 by October 1, 2009.

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***Synergia Hard Copy Request***

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Campus Mail # (if UST)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street Address (if non-UST)** \_\_\_\_\_

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## FROM THE FACULTY CENTER FOR ELEARNING

### *Aristotle's Golden Mean shines through Cloud Computing*

*by Eric Larson, Academic Technology  
Consultant, IRT*

Not long ago, “instructional technology” boiled down to a floppy disk in your office or a box of blinking lights in the basement of Aquinas Hall. Today, services are often provided (and vital information might be housed) somewhere else, on some server, in a vague “cloud” of distant networked computers.

Is that thought terrifying? Or exciting? As The Philosopher would say, the best use of “cloud computing” lies between the extremes.

We rarely think about it, but networked technology touches every aspect of our lives. Do you know where YouTube or Wikipedia really are? Where a library database of assigned journal articles really “lives”? Where your TIAA-CREF online statements are really stored?

Cloud computing promises both risks and rewards. YouTube’s vast “server farm” can provide better and faster video streaming than any St. Thomas machine could... but that service can disappear overnight (temporarily or permanently). Google’s Gmail offering is so functional that some universities have chosen to eliminate their own mail infrastructure and convert all of their email accounts to Google servers... but those universities must now plan around upgrades and outages that they no longer control.

A variety of free (or low-cost) cloud-based applications can help

you to create and distribute course content and activities. Cloud-based applications such as Voicethread (for building collaborative multimedia slideshows with images, documents, video and audio) or PollEverywhere (for “clicker-like” classroom polls using cellphones and laptops) could be a low-investment/ high-return way to help engage your students in your course.

To help us learn whether cloud computing promises UST refreshing shade or rolling storms, the Faculty Center for eLearning is using Twitter to begin a discussion of cloud computing concepts. Visit [www.twitter.com/ustfcl](http://www.twitter.com/ustfcl) and join! For more information about this or anything “in the cloud,” talk to your Academic Technology Consultant (see [www.stthomas.edu/elearning/resources](http://www.stthomas.edu/elearning/resources)).



### **UPCOMING APPLICATION DEADLINES FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**

Note that deadlines are 4 p.m. on dates below. Late applications are not accepted. All proposals must be emailed by 4 p.m. of the designated day to [pmalexander@stthomas.edu](mailto:pmalexander@stthomas.edu). Please see the FDC website for instructions and application forms, at [www.stthomas.edu/fdc](http://www.stthomas.edu/fdc).

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Grant Type</b>	<b>To Support Activity During:</b>
September 1	University Scholars Grant, Preliminary Application	Next 2-3 academic years
September 15	Faculty Partnership, Partnership in Learning	Fall and J-term of current academic year
October 1	University Scholars Grant Final Application, Sabbatical, Sabbatical Assistance Grant	Next 2-3 academic years (USG), Next academic year (SL & SAG)
February 1	Research Grant	Next academic year or summer after July 1

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK ...



*Sue Chaplin  
Faculty Development  
Director, Biology*

### ***The only constant in life is change...***

Each fall we welcome a new group of fresh faces to UST – both faculty and students. But where the new faculty I talk with seem to share a lot of my philosophy and general attitudes toward life and education, the students are increasingly different, a constantly changing target toward which we direct our well-tested teaching strategies. However, things I did in classes a few years ago are not necessarily successful with the newest student recruits to campus, and after reading up on “millennials go to college,” I finally understand why.

You’ve probably read about the characteristics of this recent generation of college students born from 1982-1995, who started college in the year 2000: adaptable, technologically savvy, learning oriented, multi-tasking, well connected (especially to their parents), and willing to work hard for As. But the latter is a problem for us in higher education; the millennial generation has been coached through childhood to value hard work as equal to success, and so they come to our classes with high expectations for good grades, if they just put in the time. Last fall I was amazed when one of my freshmen emailed me about his grade with the comment “I can’t believe I got a B; I put in at least 20 hours a week studying for your class.”

According to Christie Price (2009), a psychologist at Dalton State University (GA), the ideal millennial professor is energetic, enthusiastic, upbeat, positive, friendly, caring, helpful, and most importantly, approachable. Note that descriptors like intelligent, understandable, challenging, interesting, etc. are missing. I’m sure these characteristics are important to these students, but

being able to converse with their instructors is much higher on their lists. The ideal learning environment for millennials is: interactive and participatory, rich in real examples, has a multimedia format, relaxed, enjoyable and FUN, where students work together in groups. Note that lecture-only is not a preferred format for delivery of information to this group.

Now, some may read this and think that there is a lot of work to be done to convert the millennial generation to the “right way” to learn, but I want to encourage you to view this as a challenge to build on the skills this particular group has already developed. Having defined the moving target a little more explicitly, how will you adjust your teaching strategies accordingly? And if you find methods that work particularly well with this group of students, please share it with the rest of us.

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Price, C. 2009. Why don’t my students think I’m groovy?  
[www.daltonstate.edu/teachinglearning/pdf/cprice\\_millennials.pdf](http://www.daltonstate.edu/teachinglearning/pdf/cprice_millennials.pdf)



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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!

*The opinions expressed in articles in Synergia are not necessarily those of the Center for Faculty Development.*

# FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

## Creating Assignments to Support Course Objectives

Led by Sherry Jordon

Tuesday, Oct. 6 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. BEC 101

Tuesday, Oct. 13 2:30 - 3:30 p.m. MOH 417

How do I develop effective assignments to support the objectives of my course? Course objectives are a significant component of the new IDEA evaluations and the purpose of this workshop is to help faculty create assignments in light of these objectives. It will utilize strategies presented by Dr. Chris Anson in last summer's Writing Across the Curriculum Seminar. Come to the workshop with a specific course and its objectives in mind. The workshop will help you develop an assignment to meet one of these course objectives. Please contact Dr. Sherry Jordon (sejordon@stthomas.edu) for more information.

## Calling all First Year and Science Advisors!

Time and Location TBA

The Pre-Health Professions Advisory Committee is co-hosting a faculty development workshop on How to Advise Pre-Health Students. Topics to be discussed include the following: great websites for pre-health information; how to use the University of Minnesota's new Online Learning Modules for planning for medical school and writing personal statements; information about summer internship and shadowing opportunities; and how to have 'difficult' conversations with your advisees about exploring all options and having realistic expectations. Lunch will be provided. Registration is limited, and will be sent to you by email. For more information, please contact Roxanne Prichard, jrprichard@stthomas.edu.

This year's COMMUNITY Series theme is

## Building a Social and Intellectually Conscious Community

All Events are Free and Open to the Public

### Ms. Donna Brazile

September 21, 2009 6:30 - 7:45 p.m.  
OEC Auditorium, St. Paul Campus

Ms. Brazile will focus her presentation on the theme for the Series as she integrates aspects of its purpose in relationship to her life journey. She will highlight why social and intellectual consciousness helps to build respect in different environments to include the academy, social and political arenas. *This event is sponsored by the Office of Institutional Diversity*

### Poverty and Prayer Film Screening by Gerard Straub, Documentary Filmmaker

September 29, 2009 11:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.  
Murray Herrick Center 304, St. Paul Campus

Gerard Straub, a documentary filmmaker and award-winning author, will speak and show his film, *Poverty and Prayer*. A simple lunch will be provided for those who RSVP by **Wednesday, Sept 23rd** to Katie Ngumba at 651-962-6800. There is no charge for this event and all students, faculty, staff, and the public are welcome. *This event is sponsored by Service Learning*

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### **“I Too Sing America: Justice Sotomayor’s Influence on the Future of Diversity in Law and Higher Education”**

October 7, 2009                      4 p.m.  
Frey Moot Court Room, UST School of Law, Minneapolis Campus

This exciting event strives to promote the values of diversity and inclusiveness as our goals for this program are 1) to raise awareness of diversity and inclusiveness issues for judges and lawyers who are people of color and women; and 2) to educate students on the diversity and inclusiveness issues that still exist in law, higher education, and society at large. *This event is sponsored by the University of St. Thomas School of Law*

### **Fall Common Text Event — Michael Patrick MacDonald, author of *All Souls***

October 15, 2009                      11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. (Convo Hour)  
OEC Auditorium, St. Paul Campus

Noted author Michael Patrick MacDonald will be coming to the University of St. Thomas to speak about his celebrated memoir, *All Souls*, which has been selected as the Common Text for the fall semester. The book, a national bestseller, won an American Book Award in 2000, and along with MacDonald’s most recent book, *Easter Rising: A Memoir of Roots and Rebellion*, has been adopted by university curriculums across the country. *This event is sponsored by the Department of English, the Center for Irish Studies, the Office of Institutional Diversity, American Culture and Difference, and the Department of Sociology.*

### **“What’s the real story? Racial Profiling in America”**

October 20, 2009                      6:30 - 8:30 p.m.  
OEC Auditorium, St. Paul Campus

This event brings a rich panel of experts who represent the academy, the legal field, human rights, the community, law enforcement and the media who will analyze and explore issues and topics related to racial profiling both in American and right here in the state of Minnesota. *This event is sponsored by the Office of Institutional Diversity and the UST School of Law.*

### **Multicultural Student Services Fall Community Dialog with Melisa Rivière**

November 5, 2009                      6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
McNeely Hall, Room 100, St. Paul Campus

The Multicultural Student Services (MSS) Fall Community Dialogue will feature Latina hip-hop audio-visual producer, scholar, educator, and activist Melisa Rivière. Her work includes documenting hip-hop conferences, festivals, and live performances, leading keynote talks and pedagogical workshops, as well as producing audio recordings and music video clips. In the role of co-founding director of *B-Girl Be: A Celebration of Women in Hip-Hop* at Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis, she advocates for the empowerment of women and youth within the movement.

### **Veterans Leadership Academy**

November 10, 2009                      1 - 3 p.m.  
Location, TBD, St. Paul Campus

This session is designed to help the UST community better support veteran students, staff, and faculty members, as well as those who are family member of veterans. Participants will learn about what types of issues veterans may face, how they may experience the UST culture, and how each of us can create an inclusive environment for them to succeed. *This event sponsored by: The Leadership Academy*

### **“Theory of Mind” A Production Performed by Mixed Blood Theatre**

November 10, 2009                      7 p.m.  
OEC Auditorium, St. Paul Campus

Sponsored collaboratively with Enhancement Program - Disability Services and the Office of Institutional Diversity, this is a sensitive yet unsentimental performance portraying a young man with Asperger’s Syndrome.

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## **Assessment for the Changing Learning Environment Conference**

The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching and Learning  
February 19-20, 2010, Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington, MN

**Call for Proposals deadline: Friday, September 18, 2009**

The primary goals of this conference are to explore the implications of changes in the learning environment for how colleges and universities frame their approaches to student assessment and what new opportunities exist in our rapidly changing working environment to strengthen assessment practices and make them more efficient and productive. See website for conference registration information at [www.collab.org](http://www.collab.org).

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

*The Faculty Development Center is offering or co-sponsoring the following workshops. Register for these events by e-mailing Pat Alexander (pmalexander@stthomas.edu) with your interest at least one week prior to the workshops.*

### **IDEA Faculty Workshops**

Led by Faculty Development Classroom Consultants

Sept. 1	11 a.m. - Noon	MOH 201	OPEN to all faculty
Sept. 2	Noon -1 p.m.	JRC 126	OPEN to all faculty
Sept. 18	1 - 2 p.m.	Thornton Aud.	OPEN to all faculty
Oct. 7	1:30 - 2:30 p.m.	MCN 100	OPEN to all faculty

### **Designing Assignments around Objectives**

Led by Sherry Jordon

Tuesday, Oct. 6	3:30 - 4:30 p.m.	BEC 101
Tuesday, Oct. 13	2:30 - 3:30 p.m.	MOH 417

### **Calling all First Year and Science Advisors!**

Time and Location TBA

Look for more information in upcoming emails.



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