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Wow, What a Great Teaching and Learning Conference! - Reflections on a Packed Afternoon

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Teaching and Learning Center

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UpComing Sessions

Square Foot
Gardening 3/6

Harassment and
Discrimination
Training 4/10

Blackboard
(various topics
and times)

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Wow, What a Great Teaching and Learning Conference!—Reflections on a Packed Afternoon

The First Annual Winthrop University Conference on Teaching and Learning was a rousing success. We had over 30 presenters and over 80 attendees, including guests from York Tech and Saint Anne's School. Last Friday was a great day, full of excellent, thought-provoking, and enlightening panels, papers, and workshops.

As is the case with any good academic conference, I had multiple sessions I wanted to attend in each of the three time slots, but I had to pick just three. First for me was a session on critical thinking that featured my colleagues in the English Department, Amanda Hiner and Matthew Fike. Since I regularly teach our critical thinking course, CRTW 201, I wanted to hear what they had to present, since it would have a direct impact on my teaching and on my students. Amanda delivered an excellent paper on the "techno brain," about the ways technology is changing our (and our students')

brains. She shared her teaching activity: a "technology fast," in which students go for 48 hours without any electronic technology. They turn off their cell phones, they stop texting, they stay off Facebook, they turn off their televisions. And they freak out! But then most of them calm down and realize how much better they can focus, how much they can pay attention to reading and to their world. Their responses were insightful, inspiring, and touching. I am definitely going to try this activity with my students. Matthew Fike talked about bias in our critical thinking textbook, certainly an interesting development in a book that is supposed to foster balanced thinking. I have read our textbook more than 20 times, and I had never recognized Gerald Nosich's bias. Matt's paper was certainly thought-provoking and eye-opening.

For the second session, I attended a workshop about a new online learning platform that has

been developed by Nicholas Grossoehme, Marguerite Doman, and Michelle Wolf. "WuTopia" is certainly innovative and exciting: Nick, Marguerite, and Michelle have collaborated to produce an in-house learning platform that allows the teacher to post teaching videos that also contain in-time quizzes. Students using WuTopia watch the videos and interact as the lecture progresses. The results are impressive in form and content: contact Nick, Marguerite, or Michelle if you are intrigued. They really like to show it off!

For the third session, I did not have a choice: I was presenting some ideas on critical reading. I tried to give some practical advice on class activities that help students become better readers. I went beyond my handout "How To Read Critically" to talk about tactics that help students become more skillful at paraphrasing and summarizing, two basic skills that we wrongly assume all

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Continued from page 1

students can do on their own.

Then Greg Oakes shared an insight about teaching writing that he got from Kant: how to teach students what it means to be clear. Like many of us, Greg has struggled with ways to communicate to students what it means to be clear. He realized it did not help them when he wrote on a paper, “Be more clear here.” His insight from Kant’s philosophy clarified clarity for Greg, and he has been able to share that with his students—some of whom get it. But we all did, and Greg and I were pleased to see how well our presentations on reading and writing dove-tailed, as if we had planned that, which we did not. But doesn’t such synergy often happen at conferences?

So I got a lot, but I missed a lot, too. But isn’t that always the way with an academic conference? Fortunately, for those of us who attended but missed out on sessions we wanted to be a part of, and for those of us who couldn’t make it at all on Friday, the TLC is now gathering PowerPoints, papers, and handouts from presenters, and they will be posted on the TLC Resources page. Just another example of the

way our Winthrop colleagues share their ideas and insights freely.

The conference concluded with a big finish: closing remarks from Dr. Gloria Jones, Dean of University College, and a master teacher who has received Winthrop’s highest award for excellent teaching, the Kinard Award. Her talk showed us why she has been so honored. I know I am not the only person there who was inspired by her remarks. She gave three reasons why continuing emphasis on teaching and learning is important. Her first reason: “The expertise of colleagues is invaluable; we need to find ways, very intentionally, to learn from them.” She gave personal examples from her 30 years at Winthrop, with special thanks to our colleague in the English Department, Bill Naufftus.

Her second reason: “The university and the university students of today are very, very different from who we were and what we experienced educationally as few as twenty years ago.” The technology of teaching has gone from, she notes, mimeograph machines to SMART podiums. And the students have changed too, in ways positive and not so positive. Se we

MUST be open to change ourselves.

And her final reason: “We have to make teachers indispensable!” No matter the wonders of technology, the teacher in the classroom will always be vital, especially at Winthrop. I will conclude with her inspiring conclusion: “They need more than just someone to explain the content. They need inspiration; they need motivation; they need someone who is willing to do the work to move them beyond fact to opinion to analysis; they need someone who can teach them how to think critically. They need someone who can prepare them for the unknown. They need the people in this room who are here because they are still learners who want to become better teachers—who understand that perpetual learners make the best teachers.”

Wow. Thank you, Gloria, and thank you to the Winthrop community of perpetual learners. What a great first conference it was, and how exciting it will be next year as we open up our conference to regional colleges and universities. This truly was the start of something big!

XXITE 2.0 ----- The Virtual Gathering Place for WU (The Reboot!)

Jo Koster and I invite you to join XXITE (Twenty-first Century Teaching Excellence)—or if you have already joined, to check it out again as it grows and develops. Maybe you have not been there in a long time—if not, you will see many changes in look and content. For example, XXITE now has groups dedicated to HMXP and CRTW, with

those of us who teach those courses sharing ideas and materials. Talk to Jo about setting up your own interest group. Jo is particularly interested in recruiting a few people to blog regularly about their teaching.

Jo set up this interactive site to give Winthrop faculty a virtual gathering space to share ideas about teaching and

technology. You'll find blogs and discussion forums on various topics—and we urge you to add your own ideas. Visit again at <http://wuxxite.ning.com/> Or email Jo Koster for an invitation to join: kosterj@winthrop.edu The TLC website also has links to navigate your way there or to join: <http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/>

A New Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The Teaching and Learning Center is offering a new service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me at (803) 323-3679 or birdj@winthrop.edu.

Go2Knowledge—Learning On Demand!

Go2Knowledge is a website that offers a variety of video presentations on faculty and staff professional development. You will find presentations by nationally-known experts in seven categories: At-Risk Populations, Campus Safety, Organizational Development, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Technology,

and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

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Winthrop XXITE: Passionate Teaching

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A friendly place where Winthrop faculty & friends can share information and experiences with using social networking for teaching & research.

BLOG POSTS

- NEW POSTS ON THE RENOVATIONS**
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 22, 2012 at 2:05pm
- CORE VALUES**
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 5, 2012 at 9:41am
- PLAYING TO TYPE**
Posted by [Blaiz C. Herring](#) on May 25, 2012 at 10:22am
- TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM**
Posted by [Amanda Hiler](#) on March 15, 2012 at 12:11pm — 1 Comment
- GONE WITH THE WIND...**
Posted by [Jo Koster](#) on March 6, 2012 at 10:33am — 2 Comments

[+ Add a Blog Post](#)

NOTES

- DO COLLEGE PROFESSORS WORK HARD ENOUGH?**
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 25, 2012 at 1:34pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- WHO OWNS YOUR COURSE?**
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 19, 2012 at 12:07pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- STUDENT OWNERSHIP OF TABLETS INCREASES, PREFERENCE FOR GROWING**
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 14, 2012 at 11:24am. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)

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Thought For the Week

“Diligence is a good thing, but taking things easy is much more--restful.”
--Mark Twain, Speech,
3/30/1901