

Learning Matters

a newsletter of the Teaching Excellence Center

Information and Support for Teaching and Learning

This newsletter will keep faculty informed about workshops, teaching tips and other ideas from the Teaching Excellence Center. The TEC is here to support teaching and learning across the campus. I look forward to your participation and suggestions.

Dr. Amy Andersen, Director

Peer Review

Peer review of teaching is a great way to provide important feedback to instructors on their teaching. Peer review can be used as a formative review to help instructors improve both teaching and learning in their courses or as a summative review for evaluation purposes. Both types of peer review can be beneficial at the university level. Peer review allows instructors to avoid an over-reliance on course evaluations at the end of the semester and allows an instructor to have more available data about their teaching. It also helps an instructor improve during a semester rather than waiting until the end or the next semester to find out what could be done to help support student learning.

Peer review of teaching not only helps the instructor improve his or her teaching but can also provide new perspectives on teaching and learning to the reviewer. Peer review can provide new ideas and enhanced teaching and learning for everyone concerned.

Learn More about Peer Review

The TEC will be sponsoring a seminar on peer review of teaching on **November 3, 2009 from 2:00-3:00 p.m. in CC105**. There should be at least one representative from each department on campus at this seminar but all are welcome to attend. Please email the TEC for more information.

Classroom Tools

Do you need ideas on effective student engagement techniques? All faculty at WT are charged with engaging students in their classes but, how can we do that? Here is one simple technique to stimulate discussion about the text the students are reading.

1. Instructor selects 5-6 quotes from the text, creates multiple copies and puts them in a container.
2. Each student draws a slip of paper and takes a few minutes to think about what they want to say in response to their quote.
3. Students take turns reading a quote and commenting on it, offering new insights or building on (or contradicting) comments that have already been made.
4. Instructor facilitates the discussion to ensure that information is correct and students have ample time to respond.

This technique helps to get a class discussion started about the course readings and can help students make connections between the reading and other aspects of the course.

This idea comes from the following text which is available for check out from the TEC:
Barkley, E.F. *Student Engagement Techniques: A handbook for college Faculty* San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010.

Critical Thinking

We began the Fall 2009 semester with a workshop on critical thinking. Several faculty members have continued this conversation through a Lunch and Learn informal discussion. Critical thinking techniques used by your colleagues include:

- 16 second wait time to ponder a question and formulate a critical response
- Have students design the quiz for the day
- Write to explain why the "wrong" answers on a quiz are wrong
- "Who Should Survive" role playing scenario (six people are applying for a scholarship but only one can receive it)

Another Lunch and Learn on critical thinking will be announced soon. Watch for the time and date!

TEC Services

Remember that the TEC is available for consultations, informal early feedback, teaching strategies and many other ideas related to supporting teaching and learning across the campus. Please contact the TEC for information on any of these services.

Contact the TEC

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